The Shepherd of Us All

By
MARY STEWART

Jessie P. Johnstone,

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THE MASTER SAID, "I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD"

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STORIES OF THE CHRIST
RETOLD FOR CHILDREN

By
MARY STEWART
Author of "Tell Me a True Story,"
"Once Upon a Time Tales," etc.

ILLUSTRATED

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THE SHEPHERD'S LULLABY

Hush little baby, the wee lambs are still,
The dusk spreads her veil over valley and hill,
In the heavens above Night has opened her fold
And the star-lambs have studded her pastures with gold.
Hush little baby, lie still little sheep,
The stars are all dancing, but babies must sleep.

Sleep little baby, the silver moon wakes
And tenderly 'mid the glad stars her way takes,
Till e'er the dawn kisses the shadows with light
She gathers them all in the mantle of night.
Hush little baby, lie still little sheep,
The bright moon is watching so babies may sleep.

Wake little baby, the darkness has fled,
Over stars, moon and heavens a glory is shed.
In the hush of its coming a new Star is born,
The Star of our gladness, the Star of Christ's morn.
Wake little baby, look up where on high
The stars are all singing a new lullaby.

—FRANCES STEWART.

"And So the Book Grew"

WE were sitting in a big room looking out over the tree tops to the sparkling blue water, and there were five of us, Dorothy, Ethel, William, Sheldon, and Aunt Molly. We had been talking about some of the wonderful things in the life of Jesus Christ, and suddenly it occurred to us that the children whom He knew, whom He talked to and loved and healed all those hundreds of years ago in Palestine, were just like us. Those who lived on the seashore, chased over the beach and fished and swam in the waves, as we did, while all of them, wherever they lived, rode donkeys and played with the lambs and calves, as we had been doing that very morning. Thinking of these things made the boys and girls who lived when Jesus was born in Bethlehem seem very real to us, and it made the Master, into whose face those

children gazed, seem nearer and more wonderful than ever before.

We began talking about it all, the names those children were called by, the clothes they wore, and the places where they would have met Jesus. Gradually we thought of two certain children, and Dorothy named the girl Ruth, while William called the boy Nathaniel, and Ethel drew a picture of the kind of house they lived in. Then we started to imagine a story about what really might have happened to them, and each of us took a turn in telling what we thought about it. So a chapter was finished. But it didn't seem like a story; it was just pictures which came into our minds as we talked, and we loved doing it so much that we planned writing a whole book about these same children.

The next time we met, a cold wind ruffled the gray water of the inlet, and we sat in front of a huge fireplace which was almost as large as a small room. As we watched the great logs blaze and sparkle we saw more pictures, and they were so clear and vivid

that, when we spoke of them, we seemed to be describing children whom we had seen but lately.

And so the book grew. At Christmas time the children's mother gave us the Shepherd's Lullaby, and one sparkling winter's day Sheldon, by himself, suggested the whole story of the lost lamb. But in the other stories each child helped. Then the children went away to the deep woods for a time and Aunt Molly was left to think out the stories by herself. But before she wrote one she always made believe that the four children were around her, and as she imagined how they would look and what they would say if they were truly there listening, picture after picture came into her mind. So although they did not know it, it was with their help that the volume was finished. And now that it is printed it is to them that it belongs, for without their dreams and bright fancies, without their simple faith and loving spirit it never would have been written.

Into their hands the book is placed, and, as it is all theirs, they are the ones who now

give it to any other children who love with us to think of the boys and girls of Palestine, children of the fishermen and shepherds who lived when Jesus Christ was teaching in their country.

They saw His face and heard His words and watched His works of mercy, but as we imagine the Master to ourselves, as we think again and again of His beautiful life and thrilling words, we know that He is with us also to-day, and that we can follow and serve Him and rejoice in His presence, as surely as did these children of Palestine so many years ago.

M. S.

New York.

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I

A CHRISTMAS GIFT

AT the foot of the hill upon which the little town of Bethlehem is built there are many green fields, where shepherds guard their flocks of sheep from wolves and robbers. One bright winter's day many years ago while the fields were still green, for there is seldom snow in that country, the shepherds sitting there suddenly heard the sound of laughter and of children's voices in the air. Around the curve in the steep path down the hillside poured a throng of merry children. Each one bore a well-filled earthen jar containing the noonday meal for their fathers, and the tall brown-cloaked men arose and hurried to meet them.

No sooner had the children been relieved of their burdens than they scampered off among the sheep, greeting old pets and racing with the frisky lambs. Only two, a boy and a girl, remained behind with

their father. He drew his little daughter, Ruth, down beside him, tucking his warm cloak carefully around her, while the seven-year-old boy, Nathaniel, who was about two years older than his sister, curled up beside her, playing with his father's great crook and listening to every word of the shepherd's talk. Several days before he had overheard one shepherd say, "Surely the time is ripe for the coming of the King." And since then he and Ruth had listened eagerly to all the news they could gather about this wonderful event. This day the men were again talking about the King.

"When He comes," one shepherd said, "He will bring peace and brotherly love to the whole world," and another answered, "Yea, and I have read that those who sit on princes' seats shall be no greater in His sight than little children."

Ruth and Nathaniel clasped hands excitedly beneath their father's cloak. From the scraps of conversation they had heard these last days they had imagined for themselves a wonderful picture of the new King whose

coming was so near. He would wear royal purple robes of course, and live in a marble palace in the near-by city of Jerusalem. They had been to Jerusalem once, to a service in the great temple, and had passed the very palace where they felt sure this King would dwell. It had high marble columns in front, a splashing fountain in the midst of a garden, and separating it from the street was a golden gate at each side of which a marble lion was crouching.

The children had imagined the gates swinging open as the King and His train swept in or out. Yet this great King, with His followers and golden crown and marble lions, would be the friend of the shepherds, their father's friend!

And now, to-day, they had heard something even more remarkable. He would not be too proud to speak to them, the children of a shepherd!

They talked about it as they lay awake that night in the tiny attic of their home.

"What will you say to Him when He stops to speak to us?" asked Ruth.

Nathaniel, puzzled, did not answer for a moment. "If only we could bring Him a present," he said at last, "that would be better than speaking. I really don't think little boys ever do talk to kings."

"But what could we bring Him?" questioned Ruth, sleepily. "I haven't anything 'cept my old dolly, and you haven't even as much as that."

The little girl was soon asleep, but the boy lay watching the stars which shone through the tiny attic window. "They are as bright as the jewels in a king's crown," he thought. They reminded him also of a shepherd's lullaby with which his mother had often hushed the children, and repeating this familiar first verse to himself he too fell fast asleep.

Hush little baby, the wee lambs are still,
The dusk spreads her veil over valley and hill,
In the heavens above Night has opened her fold
And the star-lambs have studded her pastures with gold.
Hush little baby, lie still little sheep,
The stars are all dancing, but babies must sleep.

Nathaniel was humming the little song the next day as he and Ruth ran down the hill

with the other children, bearing jars of dates and wheaten bread to their fathers. But this time the shepherds did not hurry towards them. They were standing close together, listening eagerly to the oldest shepherd who was reading aloud from a roll of parchment. As the children approached they caught these words, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

"He is speaking of the King," whispered Nathaniel to Ruth, and they hurried to their father's side.

"But thou, *Bethlehem*," continued the reader, "though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall come forth one that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

"We shall see the King here, and before many days have passed," cried the shepherds, and in their wondering joy they all stood still and gazed into each other's shining eyes.

No one noticed Ruth and Nathaniel who had listened to the great news as eagerly as any of them, and who then hurried back up the steep path to the town. They had a hope that the King might come at any moment, riding through the narrow Bethlehem streets upon a snow white charger, a crown upon His head, His royal banners streaming in the breeze.

They stood upon the hill at the entrance to the town watching and waiting until the sun had set, and in the rosy afterglow the stars began to twinkle. They made Nathaniel think of his mother's song, and as the colour in the sky faded and the stars shone out brightly through the darkness he sang the words in his sweet clear voice. Then suddenly the children exclaimed with wonder and surprise. They did not see the King riding up the hilly street, but they saw something nearly as wonderful. In the sky, among the stars, a new star had suddenly appeared, brighter and larger than all the others. It was so brilliant that it lighted the plains below where the shepherds still

guarded their sheep, and yet its golden light was so soft and tender that it seemed to be shining upon something too wonderful for words. It rose higher, moved forward and then—it was gone!

But the beauty of it remained in the children's hearts and as they walked home, hand in hand, they sang softly a new verse to their mother's song.

Wake little baby, the darkness has fled,
Over stars, moon and heavens a glory is shed.
In the hush of its coming a new Star is born,
The Star of our gladness, the Star of Christ's morn.
Wake little baby, look up where on high
The stars are all singing a new lullaby.

As the days grew shorter and the nights colder the shepherds' children carried earthen pitchers of soup to their fathers at sunset. The men heated the supper over their bonfires while the children waited for the spoonfuls of hot soup which always rewarded them for their journey. Then they scampered up the steep hillside, racing to see who could reach the top first.

But gradually they walked more and more slowly, listening to Nathaniel's song, which they picked up one after another, until soon every child in Bethlehem, from baby Ruth to the ten-year-old boy of the master shepherd, sang every word so clearly and sweetly that the shepherds below paused in their talk to listen, and smiled at one another as they exclaimed, "Even the children's hearts are longing for the coming of the King!"

But day after day passed and He did not come, although Ruth and Nathaniel watched for Him eagerly, running to the edge of the town as soon as day broke and standing there again in the evening after they returned from the shepherds.

At dawn they listened for the sound of many horses' hoofs coming up the steep road, but the only sound was the bleat of a baby lamb or a bird's song, and in the dark when they watched for the glimmer of a hundred torches, the only light came from the sparkling stars. For the glorious star had not appeared again and the children felt that

in some mysterious way it was connected with the King's coming.

One evening all the children stood around the shepherds' fires waiting for the hot soup, warming their hands, and listening as their fathers talked earnestly about their great hope. Suddenly the sky before them became as bright as if the new star was rising and then, instead of the star, there stood before the shepherds and the children a glorious angel.

"Fear not," he said, for some of the children had run, frightened, to their fathers' arms. "Fear not, for behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of Bethlehem a Saviour who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you, you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."

And suddenly there was with the angel a host of angels all singing :

> Glory to God in the Highest,
> And on earth peace,
> Good-will towards men.

It was the sweetest song the world has ever heard. It echoed back from the silent hills over the starlit plain, and then as its last notes softly died away, the shining angels unfolded their great white wings and soared back slowly into the heavens.

Then the shepherds, thinking only of the King who was already waiting for them, hurried up the steep path carrying their tiniest lambs beneath their cloaks, and the children were left behind.

But the boys and girls had heard enough about the coming of the Christ to know that He was their King also, and although their steps were short and slow in comparison to their fathers', they came climbing afterwards, and reached a rough stable cave in the rocks just in time to see the shepherds disappear within it. A lantern, like a single star, hung across the entrance, but the children did not dare enter nor even peep inside the cave.

They knew that there, close to them, was the glorious King for whose coming the world had waited many years, the King who would teach all men to be brothers. The angel said

that He had come as a tiny baby lying in a manger, but surely, the children thought, He could not be like their babies at home. Their minds were full of pictures of jewels and royal robes and golden crowns, and although Ruth and Nathaniel had watched and longed for this moment, they were too shy now that He was so near them to even bow before Him.

"We have no gift for Him," sighed Nathaniel, and in answer the children whispered, "Our fathers can give Him their lambs. When our mothers come they can bring the sheep's wool dyed blue and scarlet. We are so small perhaps we would not even be allowed to come into His presence."

Before long the shepherds came out, their faces shining as if the glory of the angels was still streaming upon them, and without noticing the huddled group of children they hurried off to tell others the good news.

As the children waited the sky again grew bright, and once more the radiant new star appeared. It moved until it shone forth like a small sun, right over the cave in which the

King lay. The children were bathed in its tender light, they looked almost like child angels, and then suddenly from within the cave they heard a low cry, like the wail of a tiny baby.

Without another thought they slipped into the cave, and there at the farther end they saw a lovely woman wrapped in a sky blue cloak, and beside her a manger filled with fragrant hay. No royal attendants stood around, only a woolly sheep, a red cow, a quiet gray donkey, and upon the rafters above two blue pigeons.

But within the manger, wrapped, not in purple and gold, but in soft white bands, lay a wonderful baby. He was as beautiful as the new star, whose glory shone around Him, and again He pursed up His wee mouth and uttered a low cry.

Around His manger clustered the children, all with but one thought, to comfort that star-like baby, and when Nathaniel whispered, "Let us sing Him our song," their sweet childish voices rose and filled the stable cave with the shepherd's lullaby.

Hush little baby, the wee lambs are still,
The dusk spreads her veil over valley and hill,
In the heavens above Night has opened her fold
And the star-lambs have studded her pastures with gold.
Hush little baby; lie still little sheep,
The stars are all dancing, but babies must sleep.

Sleep little baby, the silver moon wakes
And tenderly 'mid the glad stars her way takes,
Till e'er the dawn kisses the shadows with light
She gathers them all in the mantle of night.
Hush little baby, lie still little sheep,
The bright moon is watching so babies may sleep.

The baby smiled, and nestling his tiny head in the soft hay fell fast asleep.

The lovely woman smiled upon them. "That is a beautiful gift, dear children, which you have brought to the Christ Child," she said; "it is my little son's first Christmas gift from the children whom He has come to lead."

II

IN THE GOLDEN TEMPLE

YEARS passed after the shepherds' children had knelt, singing, before the Christ Child's manger in Bethlehem. The starlike Baby had gone, no one knew whither, and soon most of the children ceased waiting for His return. They remembered Him always, the memory of that first wonderful Christmas could never be forgotten, but Ruth and Nathaniel were the only children who, as they grew into older boys and girls, still hoped and watched for another glimpse of the Child King.

When Nathaniel was eighteen years old he had a flock of sheep of his own, and as he led them from valley to valley seeking the greenest spots on which they might graze, Ruth went with him. She was almost a woman by that time, and a very lovely one. Her hair was soft and brown as a bird's wing, her eyes like bits of blue sky, and her

voice was as merry and sweet as the bubbling brooks by which they rested at noon time. She spun sheep's wool upon a distaff as she sat beside her big brother, and around her nestled the tiniest baby lambs, which were her especial care. The brother and sister spoke often, in hushed tones, of the Christ Child, wondering when He would come again to begin His glorious work in the world which needed Him so sorely. Sometimes, as they watched the stars shine out through the evening sky, they sang again the song which had been their childish gift to the wee Baby upon His first birthday. They did not dream that during the years which had passed since then the mother of the Christ Child had sung Him to sleep, time and again, with that same simple lullaby.

His home was among the hills also, miles away, and beyond the hills rose mountain peaks encircling the little village in which He lived, "like the opening petals of a rose."

Soft breezes, fragrant flowers and shining stars watched over the Christ as He grew from a tiny baby into a strong and beautiful

boy. He spent much of His time out-of-doors, as Ruth and Nathaniel did, and the winds and clouds and mountain peaks were as truly His friends as the shepherds' children were to one another. He was not idle; He worked with His father in his carpenter's shop, studied in the village school and helped His mother care for the younger children. But the carpenter's shop had one side open towards the mountains, as wonderful lessons could be learnt from the birds and the stars as from any long-robed teacher, and the loveliest playthings for the little brothers and sisters were bright flowers, and sweet songed birds which answered to one's call.

So the boy Jesus grew up in the beautiful village of Nazareth, and one day His mother said to Him, "My son, early to-morrow morning your father and I start on a journey to the city of Jerusalem, to the great feast. You are twelve years old now, almost a man, and it is time that you went with us to worship in the beautiful temple."

At dawn they started, the mother riding a donkey which her husband led, while the

boy walked beside them, amid green fields gay with bright flowers, along narrow roads lined with blossoming fruit trees, and valleys through which silvery streams rippled. At night they slept beneath the stars, those same radiant friends which had watched over the cave on Christmas night, and shone through the attic windows in Bethlehem while Ruth and Nathaniel, as tiny children, dreamed of the coming of the King. They shone now upon the boy Jesus as He journeyed towards the great city, and also upon the plains outside the walls of Jerusalem where Nathaniel watched his flocks while Ruth, in a tiny shepherd's hut near by, sang the children to sleep with the song of the stars and the Saviour.

Days passed, and the city of Jerusalem was thronged with hundreds of people who had come to the great feast. The houses were filled to overflowing, and the streets were crowded with little tents made of woven mats and boughs in which many visitors spent their nights. In one such tent Mary and Joseph and the boy Jesus camped. But

their days were spent in the splendid temple, listening to sermons from wise preachers, joining in the services of glad music, watching in the morning the procession of gorgeously robed priests march up the marble steps, and in the evening the great lamps blaze out around the shining white and gold building.

But amid the beauty and splendour, the lights and the music, there was much that must have puzzled the young Christ. He saw sorrow and cruelty and hunger, such as He had never dreamed of in His mountain-encircled home, and He must have begun to feel how sadly the world needed Him with His message of brotherly love. So when His mother and father joined the band of pilgrims who were journeying back over the road by which they had come, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, hoping to find there an answer to the question in His heart, "How shall I begin my Heavenly Father's work in the world?"

It was there that Ruth and Nathaniel found Him again. They had left the sheep

in the care of a boy shepherd for one afternoon, that they might go to Jerusalem, and as they walked across a courtyard in the temple they saw a sight which in some mysterious way reminded them of the cave on Christmas night. Through an open arched window they could see into a large room where the oldest and wisest priests of the temple met. In the midst of them, seated upon the coloured stone floor, was a boy about whom the glory of the Christmas angels seemed still to linger. He was so beautiful, so filled with youth and strength and spirit, that those solemn, stately priests, with their long white beards and flowing robes, gazed at Him startled as if they were looking at and listening to a vision from heaven. Ruth and Nathaniel could not catch the priests' low words, but they could hear the boy's clear, ringing answers, and then they heard Him ask eager questions about how sin and sorrow could be cured and comforted, questions at which the priests shook their heads, for they knew not.

For a long time the shepherd boy and girl

stood there, drinking in every word the young King spoke. They knew at once that it must be He; He had come again, they thought, to begin His gracious work, and when the darkness fell and they had to return to their flocks, they felt sure that somewhere soon they would see and hear Him again.

As they left the city and crossed the fields to their sheep, the stars began to twinkle in the pale sky, and both the shepherd and his sister sang softly the lullaby with which they had first greeted the Christ Child. Suddenly a woman's voice stopped them. "Who are you," it cried, "who sing the song which has so often quieted my son, my dear son for whom I have been seeking these three long days?"

Turning they saw a woman's form wrapped in a dark cloak, and behind her stood a man leading a little donkey. "We are two of the shepherd's children," answered Nathaniel; "we sang our song first to quiet the starlike baby, and we sang it again to-day because once more we have seen the Christ. He is seated in the midst of the priests, both hear-

ing them and asking them questions. You will find Him there, for we have just left them. See, the lights of the temple shine out through the darkness, as He, your son, shines out among the wisest and noblest in the land."

And so, with the temple lights to guide them, Mary and Joseph found their boy. And when Mary exclaimed, "My Child, why dost Thou thus deal with us? Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing," He answered in words which must have stirred the hearts of the wise men, showing them that this lad was indeed sent into the world for work nobler than any of them could perform, "Why is it that ye were seeking Me? Did ye not know that I must be about My Father's business?"

III

ON THE SHORES OF THE LAKE

THINK of a lovely lake, as blue as the sky above it, surrounded by bright gardens and ripe vineyards and blossoming trees. Brilliant birds flash among the green leaves and skim over the waters, darting into the waves every few moments to pick up a silvery fish.

It was no wonder that two children who stood there were absorbed and blissful, watching the birds, the dancing waves, and the boats which sailed merrily by. Such wonderful boats as they were, as different in size and colour as the many birds which flew over the children's heads. There were boats laden with golden corn and others which moved slowly, weighed down with glittering marble; there were little fishing boats with square coloured sails, piled high with shining fish; and once gay music floated across the

LITTLE FISHING BOATS WITH SQUARE, COLOURED SAILS, AT ANCHOR

water and a ship with a purple canopy and sails of shimmering whiteness came in sight. As it drew near the children they saw that a prince with royal robes and a golden crown was seated beneath the canopy, and beside him smiled a lovely lady, whose sweeping garments glittered with jewels.

"When I am a man I will buy a gown like that for my mother," said the boy, Nathaniel.

"And won't you buy a boat like that, then, to carry me?" asked the little girl, Ruth, looking down sorrowfully at her twisted foot, for she was a cripple.

Her mother was the Ruth we have heard about before, one of the shepherd's children, who later married a fisherman and came to live upon the shores of this Lake of Galilee. She had missed her brother's lambs sadly until baby Ruth was born, and then she found that there was more bliss in tending one little baby than in caring for all the wee lambs in the flock.

One day, a few years after the baby came, she had journeyed proudly back over the lovely path which runs from Galilee to Beth-

lehem to show the little daughter to her brother Nathaniel. He had married some time before and had a boy named after him, so there was the same difference between the ages of the little cousins as between the now grown up Ruth and Nathaniel. And such fun as the children had together!

Every day they climbed up and down the steep path from Bethlehem to the shepherds' fields, the path which the shepherds had climbed years before, when through the night which still echoed with the angel's song, they hurried wondering to the cave where the Christ Child was lying.

The cousins played also with the lambs and petted the sheep which belonged to Nathaniel's flock, until each one knew the lisping call of baby Ruth and came to snuggle its warm nose in her tiny hand.

Poor sheep, they could not know that when Ruth wandered off alone one day, trotting contentedly after a lamb which frisked and gambolled over the rocks, that the whole flock should have run, bleating for help, to the shepherd. For the lamb could climb safely

where Ruth's little feet could never take her, and as she tried to follow, she slipped and one tiny foot caught in a cleft of the rock.

There the shepherd, her Uncle Nathaniel, found her, crying as piteously as a lost lamb. He carried her gently home and she was nursed with as much love and skill as if she had been the one child in Bethlehem, but she could not stand again upon the twisted foot and her back often ached sadly.

Her mother loved her more than ever, if that were possible, and her father carried her back tenderly in his strong arms to their home beside the lake. He made her a pair of crutches and every afternoon Ruth hobbled down to the beach and sat there watching for the sight of an orange sail, as her father's little brown fishing boat came flying home to her.

It was for this boat that Ruth and her cousin Nathaniel waited that day as they sat upon the seashore, watching the birds and the waves as well as the passing ships. The sun had set and the music from the golden ship was dying away in the distance,

when the orange sail came suddenly around a curve in the shore, looking like the brilliant wing of a bird as it approached through the twilight.

"Father! Father!" sang little Ruth, and Nathaniel called too in his merry voice, until the fisherman's shout answered them, and the boat was soon pulled up on the beach. Then while Ruth cuddled down in her father's arms and Nathaniel ran ahead, the fisherman hurried home to the white cottage, where the mother stood in the doorway watching for them.

As soon as supper was over the children were tucked into bed, but the fisherman and his wife sat up nearly all night in the room below talking in hushed voices, while the moon rose high in the heavens and all the outside world fell silent and asleep. Towards morning the children woke once and overheard a few words, "A new doctor," "curing all who come to Him," and the father's last words were, "His face is more beautiful than the sunrise."

"I hope they won't take me to any more

doctors," whispered Ruth to Nathaniel; "they hurt me so, and they cannot cure me." And then a golden beam from the rising sun shone into their tiny room and the children fell fast asleep.

The next day was the Sabbath, and although the family spent the first part of the day as usual, going to church and coming back to the dinner of bread and cheese and fruit, the father and mother kept glancing happily at each other as if they knew an exciting secret. At dinner little Ruth suddenly questioned, "Father, who is as beautiful as the sunrise?"

Her father smiled and answered, "Only one man in the whole world, I believe. I saw Him yesterday walking upon the beach at the other end of the lake. Shall I take you to see Him this afternoon?"

The children clapped their hands for joy and soon the little fishing boat was dancing over the waves, while the mother held Ruth in her arms, and Nathaniel pulled and coiled ropes for his uncle.

As they neared the shore for which they

were steering they saw a huge crowd of people standing there, and when they sailed closer they heard cries and groans of pain. For many in the crowd were lying on their beds, too weak to sit up, and others were led or carried by their friends, for they were blind, or lame, or suffering from fearful diseases. Pale-faced babies lay with their eyes shut in their mother's arms, and sick little children cried fretfully as their fathers held them.

"Oh, do not let us land here, let us sail away quickly!" cried Nathaniel, and Ruth buried her head in her mother's lap that she might not see more of the sorrowful scene.

"Look again, my child," said her father, "look at the man,—or is He an angel?—who is moving among the people."

The children looked, and caught sight of a face so glorious and so tender that they forgot the horror of what they had just seen, and their one wish was to see this man again, to be near enough to hear His voice. Among the suffering ones He moved, the

one strong, quiet, beautiful figure in all that moaning crowd. To some He spoke cheering words, to others He gave his hand, and at others He only smiled, but when their eyes met His, pain and disease left them and they were well!

There were so many waiting for Him, and others still pouring in, that by the time the fisherman had drawn his boat up upon the beach and carried Ruth to the outskirts of the crowd, there were hundreds of sufferers to whom the glorious Master must bring strength before He reached the little cripple girl.

She grew very tired of waiting; the press of people hid the beautiful face from her, her back ached, and soon the tears which she tried to keep back trickled down her face. Her mother put her arm around her to comfort her.

"See," she said, "the stars are beginning to shine in the sky. They remind me of a lullaby my mother used to sing to my brother and me. Lean back in my arms and I will sing it to you.

"Hush little baby, the wee lambs are still,
The dusk spreads her veil over valley and hill,
In the heavens above Night has opened her fold
And the star-lambs have studded her pastures with gold.
Hush little baby; lie still little sheep,
The stars are all dancing, but babies must sleep."

The mother sang the words very softly. As she ceased, she felt a light touch upon her shoulder and a gracious voice asked, "Where did you learn that song? It is the lullaby with which my mother often hushed her children."

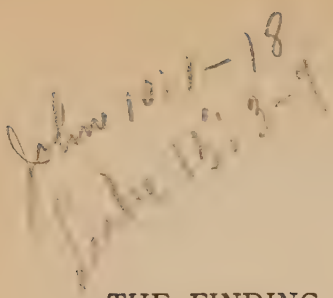
The Master was there beside them, the Christ, the same King to whom Ruth and Nathaniel had sung in the cave on Christmas night, whom they had seen in the temple among the priests, and who now again appeared to the mother when she most needed His help.

In a few broken sentences, she told Him the story of the children's song, her own child and the twisted foot. Very tenderly, the Master lifted little Ruth in His arms; His smile, like sunshine, brought an answering

light into her face, and thinking only of His enfolding love, she did not realize until He had put her down that the pain in her back had gone, her foot was well, and without any crutch she stepped back to her mother's side.

Such a happy family as sailed home in the starlight! The waves seemed to ripple for joy, the stars twinkled and the children sang,

"Wake little baby, the darkness has fled,
Over stars, moon and heavens a glory is shed.
In the hush of its coming a new Star is born,
The Star of our gladness, the Star of Christ's morn.
Wake little baby, look up where on high
The stars are all singing a new lullaby."



IV

THE FINDING OF THE LITTLE LAMB

RUTH, the crippled child, could walk! The news spread quickly through the village, and the tiny house where Ruth lived was thronged with visitors listening eagerly to the wonderful story, and gazing astonished at the sight of the happy little girl. Could the Master heal them also and their friends, they asked anxiously, and when Ruth's mother described the wretched crowd who had come to the Lord, and the happy people whom He had sent away, the eyes of the listeners glistened with excitement.

"My son has been blind since he was born," cried an old woman; "how I would love to have him see my face once before I die!"

"My boy has lain flat upon his back for many years," exclaimed a fisherman. "Who

will help me carry him upon his bed to the Lord?"

"My baby grows weaker every day," said a sad faced woman; "he barely opens his eyes now. I would carry him from one end of the country to the other to find the physician who could cure him."

"Then go at once, my friends," said Ruth's father; "do not lose an hour, for I hear that already the Master has started upon a journey south. He will help every one of you, for He has come, He says, to seek and to save all who have need of Him."

Out of the village poured a stream of men and women carrying their sick friends, and Ruth and Nathaniel, watching them go, wished they could be among the company. They had a great longing to see the Lord's face again, to hear His voice, and when Ruth's mother suggested taking Nathaniel back to Bethlehem and leaving Ruth there with him for a visit the children were delighted.

"Father said the Master was going south," whispered Ruth to her cousin; "perhaps we

will meet Him upon our journey." But although they met many sick and sorrowful people upon that pathway, all travelling to find Jesus, they caught no sight of the glorious face of which they dreamed.

It was early spring and the fields around Bethlehem where the shepherds kept their flocks were carpeted with bright flowers. The children brought in armfuls of gorgeous lilies and fragrant anemones. "Are they not lovely!" cried Ruth. "But," she added softly, "they are not as beautiful as the face of the Master."

When a lark flew upward singing its very heart out the children clasped hands and listened with delight. Then as the bird sank again to its nest in the grass Nathaniel whispered, "Even that song is not as clear and tender as the voice of the Christ."

They thought of another name for the Lord. Every morning they watched the shepherd, Nathaniel's father, open the gate of the sheepfold. He stood there calling the sheep and lambs by name, and out of the narrow entrance poured the flock, all cluster-

ing close to the shepherd whom they loved. "That is the way the throng of poor, sick people crowded around Jesus," said Nathaniel.

During the day the children wandered far with the sheep. The shepherd led them beside the clear streams to the greenest pastures. Sometimes a lamb strayed away, and then the shepherd would leave the flock with the children and go far and wide in search of the one that was lost. Often he journeyed through darkness and storm before he found the missing lamb, but he never came back without it.

"That is the way the Master loved the people who were sick or frightened," said Ruth; "let us call Him the Good Shepherd," and Nathaniel answered, "Yes, for He truly is the Shepherd of us all."

One evening the children heard Nathaniel's father tell his wife that Jesus was near there, that very day He had been preaching in a town a few miles off.

"How I wish I could go in search of Him to-morrow," said the shepherd. "I want

to thank Him for curing Ruth and I long to see and hear Him myself. But, of course, I cannot leave my flock."

The children were so excited that night they could hardly sleep. Early the next morning they watched the shepherd open the fold, and before he was out of sight they scampered off in the other direction, the direction of the town where they hoped to find the Master. The shepherd thought they had gone home and his wife thought they were with the flock, so no one worried about them, and they trudged on until afternoon before they reached the little town. Just outside of it was a well where the people came to draw water and there, with their jars half filled or wholly forgotten, stood men and women all gazing at one figure in their midst, all listening eagerly to His gracious words. Among the crowd crept Ruth and Nathaniel. Hidden by the grown people they could not see the speaker's face, but they knew it was the Master's voice and they listened to His words with wondering astonishment. For Jesus was talking to

the people around Him about something which the children knew and understood as well as any grown person there. He was telling them about a good shepherd, how he called his own sheep by name and led them and they followed him, for they knew his voice. He spoke of what a true shepherd did when he saw a wolf coming, how he risked his life to save his flock. And then the Master said, "I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd giveth His life for His sheep. . . . I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine."

"We knew it, we knew it," whispered the children. "He is truly, as we thought, the Shepherd of us all."

Soon the Master went into a house near by to see a sick child and the crowd scattered. Ruth and Nathaniel turned homeward, but it was growing dark; they took a wrong turn, and presently they found they had lost their way. Still darker it grew; a tiny silver moon began to glimmer through the twilight, and the children found themselves on a wide plain

with nothing in sight but great rocks and a few scraggly bushes. Ruth was so tired she could walk no further, and sank upon the ground. Nathaniel tried to keep her from crying, although there were tears in his own eyes. They were so small and weary and the plain looked so fearful and lonesome in the gathering darkness. "There may be wolves crouching behind every rock," thought the boy, "and father will never know where to look for us."

"We are like two lost lambs," sobbed Ruth, "and there isn't any shepherd to come and find us."

"Yes there is!" exclaimed Nathaniel. "How could we forget for a moment? The Master said that He was our Shepherd and that He took care of us the way father takes care of his flock. I am sure He will find us. Just curl up under my cloak and try to sleep while we wait, and I will sing you the song father loves, the song the Master knew also."

Then as the moon brightened in the darkening sky the boy sang,

"Sleep little baby, the silver moon wakes
And tenderly 'mid the glad stars her way takes,
Till e'er the dawn kisses the shadows with light
She gathers them all in her mantle of night.
Sleep little baby, lie still little sheep,
The bright moon is watching so babies may sleep."

And the Good Shepherd heard the song. He had left the town and walked out across the plain where He could be alone. There, in the distance, He heard the boy's voice and followed it, until He found the two children who were waiting for Him.

"We knew you would come," said little Ruth when He gathered her tenderly in His arms, and nestling her head upon His shoulder she fell fast asleep. Nathaniel did not speak, he was too happy, too awed for any words, he just gripped tightly the strong hand which held his and the Master understood all that the little lad felt but could not say.

The shepherd and his wife stood at the gate of the fold, watching for the children, and there through the twilight they saw the

Good Shepherd coming towards them, bearing in His arms, not a lost lamb, but the little lost child.

Never as long as they lived did any in the shepherd's house forget that evening. Even when they said good-bye to the Master and watched Him walk away under the stars they did not feel that He was leaving them. They knew, although they could not explain how, that He could never again be very far from them, that He would be taking care of them always, father, mother and children, as a shepherd takes care of his flock, for they had become His followers, followers of Jesus Christ, the Shepherd of us all.

Luke 5:1-11

V

THE LEAVING OF THE NETS

THE throng of suffering people and their friends, who had poured out of the fishing village in search of the Master, returned slowly in little groups. Soon after starting they had separated, for no one knew where the great physician was, and while many searched the villages, some travelled to desert places, and others followed the bank of the river Jordan.

So it was many months before all had returned to their homes and when they did,—the deaf hearing, the blind seeing, and the lame walking,—the most glorious news they brought was not of their recovery. Each one, grown person or little child, almost forgot the story of their cure in their wonder of the Master who had healed them. Their faces shone when they spoke of Him and their eyes had caught from His a light which never left them. The stories of His words,

His looks, and His deeds were told again and again in the little village. The fishermen repeated them to one another as they fished at night beneath the stars, the women told them while they spun and wove, and many rocked their babies to sleep with the lullaby which the shepherd's children had sung, and which the Master knew.

The children listened entranced to every word of the stories, and often at sundown they met upon the beach and talked of times when they themselves had seen or heard the Christ. For some of the children had been healed by Him, many had seen sick mothers or fathers given back their strength, and others had watched the marvellous kind things Jesus did for the people who came to Him. Late one afternoon, as the fishermen launched their boats upon the waves and started out for a night's work, a lad told the listening children his story.

"For weeks I had begged my Uncle Peter to take me fishing with him," said the lad, and the children seating themselves around him upon the beach were attentive to every

word. "He said I was not strong enough to pull in a net," continued the boy, "and if I went along just to watch, my weight, together with the big haul they always hoped to get, would make the boat too heavy.

"There were two boats which sailed together, my Uncle Peter's and the one belonging to his friends James and John. My uncle had a strong young fellow who went with him as a helper, for it takes two, you know, to manage a net, and every evening at sunset the boats with the four men started out. I used to stand on the beach and watch them sailing right into the heart of the sunset, and how I longed to be big enough to go too!

"Before dawn I was down again on the sands, and as the sun rose the boats came sailing back, right down the golden pathway, with the fish shining in silver heaps upon the decks.

"One evening Uncle Peter launched his boat alone and sailed around close to the beach, waiting for his helper who had not come. The fishing had been bad for several days, and unless they made a big catch that

night I had heard them say that many in the village would suffer.

"James and John had sailed far out and Uncle Peter, looking anxiously up and down the beach for the young man, caught sight of me standing there alone. He called to me to run home and tell my mother I would be back in the morning and then to come and take his helper's place. 'Even his little arms are better than none at all,' I heard him say as I rushed off. Oh, how excited I was! I ran all the way home and back to the beach, waded out to the boat and we were off, with the glow of the fading sunset around us.

"But it was not a very happy night after all. I had dreamed of lying flat on the deck looking up at the stars, the waves lapping below me, until I should feel like a bird floating between sky and sea. But the sky was dark and cloudy, and although we threw out net after net, when we drew them in there was not even the glimmer of a fish there.

"The men grew very worried, for they had counted upon the result of that night's work to feed their families. When morning

came it was still cloudy and we sailed home through a dull, dreary mist. But as we drew near the shore we saw a strange sight. Although we were in the fog the sun was shining upon the beach, blue waves were breaking upon it with showers of glittering spray, and there in the sunshine stood a glorious figure. He was the most wonderful looking man we had ever seen. The wind blew His robes, the waves broke close to His feet, the blue sky stretched behind Him, and upon His face shone the golden rays of the rising sun. We were out in the mist and the grayness, disappointed and weary, but when we saw that figure we forgot everything but His beauty.

"The villagers heard that He was near and soon a crowd collected around Him. Because of the throng we could not see Him, so we anchored our boats close to the shore and dragging out the poor empty nets began to wash them. Presently we saw the Master again. So close did the people press that He could not speak to them all, and catching sight of my uncle's empty boat He stepped into it, and asked him to push out a little

from the land. Then the Master sat down in the stern of the boat, and taught the eager crowd things that were more beautiful than the sea or the sunshine, and yet were simple enough for any child to understand.

"And I was there in the boat with Him! I could put out my hand and touch His fluttering robes, I could hear every tone in His voice, see every glance in His eyes, and once He turned and smiled at me!—I knew then that He loved me, *me* a poor fisher lad, and I would have died to serve Him.

"The Master must have noticed the look of disappointment on the fishermen's faces when they sailed up through the fog with no fish on board. For when He had finished teaching He said to my uncle,

"'Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught,' and Uncle Peter answered, 'Master, we have toiled all night and have taken nothing; nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net.'

"So we sailed out a little and threw over the net, and when we tried to pull it in it was so full of shining fish that the net began to break!

JESUS SAID TO THEM, "FEAR NOT, FROM HENCEFORTH THOU SHALT CATCH MEN"

"Then Uncle Peter beckoned to James and John, who were in the other ship, that they should come and help us. And they came, and we filled both ships so that they began to sink with the weight of the fish.

"When Uncle Peter saw it he fell down at Jesus' knees saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' For he was astonished and so were all of us at the great draught of fishes. And Jesus said to them, 'Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.'

"I think He meant that they should draw people who needed help around them as He had done, and give them comfort and happiness. For as soon as they had brought their ships to land Uncle Peter and James and John left their nets, and they have been with the Master ever since, following Him wherever He goes.

"At first I longed to go too. But I think, as I remember His smile I am sure, that even though I must stay here and be a simple fisherman all my life, I too can be a follower of the Master."

VI

THE OLD FISHERMAN'S STORY

FOR many years the children in the fishing village had seen an old fisherman with a stern and frowning look, who passed often up and down the beach. They were all afraid of him, and although some of the bigger boys would not run away when they met him, as the little children did, their hearts beat fast as they hurried by, not daring to lift their eyes to his dark, gloomy face.

They knew he had a sick son who, it was said, would never again be able to lift his head from his pillow, and the children would have felt sorry for the poor father if he had not looked so ugly and terrifying. They did not know, no one in the village knew, half how wretched the old fisherman really was. His son had once been a healthy child with a merry, handsome face and his mother and

father had been oh, so proud of him! They had often dreamed of the fine things he would do when he grew up.

"He is so strong," his mother would say; "he will start in young with the fishing, and then he will make you sit cozily at home while he earns much money and keeps us both in comfort."

"The fishing will not be fine enough for him," the father would answer; "he will become an attendant upon some nobleman; he is so handsome and clever I shouldn't wonder if a prince took a fancy to him."

But the beautiful child did not fulfill any of his parents' dreams. He was selfish and lazy and often cruel. As he grew tall and strong, instead of helping his father he laughed when he saw the tired old man start out to work each morning at daybreak. And when the fisherman came home in the evening after selling his fish, the boy was always waiting at the door with his hand outstretched for the scanty earnings.

It broke the mother's heart to see what a useless, selfish man the son had become, and

she died, leaving the fisherman alone with the boy. It was no wonder the father's face grew stern and sad as he worked on, day after day, for the son who never gave him a word of thanks or a look of love. And then suddenly the boy fell ill; he could not sit up in bed, could not lift his head or his right hand. At first he was furious; he sulked and scolded all day and much of the night. But as he lay there, watching the old father go and come from work as regularly as the sun rose and set, he began to feel sorry, to be ashamed of his past life. He remembered how proud his mother had once been of him and how he had broken her heart. He saw the bitter look upon his father's face and knowing that he, the son, had brought it there, he would have given anything in the world to have been able to live his life over again, to work for his father and bring comfort to his mother. The misery of lying flat upon his back grew to be not nearly as terrible as the sorrow for his past years, which kept him awake for hours, sobbing sometimes in the dark.

Nothing the poor father could do or say to his son seemed to help him, and the house where the weary old man and the wretched son lived, was the saddest in the whole village.

And then the father heard of the Master! For several days the children did not see the gloomy old man upon the beach, and when they did they hardly knew he was the same person. His bent back was straight, his glowering eyes were almost smiling, and the many lines of care upon his face had been smoothed away.

As he passed he gave a friendly greeting to the children and one small boy exclaimed, "You look so different; you must have seen the Master. Oh tell us what He said to you!"

The other children would have hushed the boy but the old fisherman stopped, smiled at them, and answered, "Indeed I would like to tell you of the wonderful thing the Master has done for me. I want every child in this village to remember the story and tell it some day to their own children." And so, seated

upon the beach with the waves murmuring beside them, the old man told this story.

"When I first heard of the great physician who had cured little Ruth," he said, "I longed to take my son to him but, as you know, he could not walk a step, and I have been a gloomy man for so long that I had no friends, and did not think any of the neighbours would leave their work to help me carry the lad. But I found that all in the village who had once seen the Master were watching for ways to be kind and neighbourly, and when they heard my request more men than were needed offered to help me.

"My boy did not see any use in our taking him. 'Even if the great physician can heal my body,' he said, 'I shall be no happier. My sorrow for my sins is so great that all my life must be miserable.' But when he remembered that if he were strong again he could help me, he was willing to let us carry him to the town where we heard the Lord's coming was expected.

"When we reached the top of the hill

which overlooks the part of the lake where the town is, we saw a sail coming towards us.

"'The Master must be on board,' said one of the neighbours who was carrying the bed; 'see the crowd which has come down to the shore to meet Him.'

"And there, before the boat landed, was such a throng of men that we could not see the Master step ashore. Many of them wore long, flowing robes and we knew they were the learned men and the priests who had come all the way from the city of Jerusalem to hear Jesus.

"With the crowd surrounding and following Him, He walked to the home where He often stayed, and after He had entered the people filled the house and the courtyard around it, yes, even blocked up the street outside so that there was no chance of any one else even reaching the door.

"I was so disappointed that I sat down upon the hillside and buried my face in my hands. I had felt so sure that if the Master could see my son just once the shadow of despair which filled our home would be lifted.

"Then one of the neighbours put his hand upon my shoulder and said,

"'Look, what is that upon the roof of the house where the Lord is?'

"I looked up and saw a child standing there, and another was climbing the outside stairway which was built upon one wall of the house.

"'Let us follow the children!' exclaimed the neighbour; 'let us also climb upon the roof carrying the bed, and perhaps we may there find some way of reaching the Master.'

"So we carried the heavy burden up the narrow stairs to the tiled roof and then, because there was no other way, we took out some of the tiles, looked down upon the heads of the crowd below and slowly lowered the bed with my boy upon it to Jesus' feet.

"At the noise of the breaking roof the people looked up surprised, and when they saw the bed lowered they crowded back in astonishment and left a space where it could rest.

"The Master was gazing at us as we stood upon the roof watching Him, and when He

saw how great was our faith in Him, He turned and bent over the bed on which my son lay. At one glance, without any words, He understood that what tortured the poor lad day and night was not his illness but sorrow for his sin.

"'Son,' Jesus said to him, 'be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee.'

"The people listened astounded. They had expected to see the Lord cure the sick man of his ailment, and instead He was saying a strange thing. 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.'

"'What does this mean?' they thought. 'Who can forgive sins but God alone?' They did not speak those words, but all the priests and scholars must have thought them for we heard Jesus say in answer,

"'Why reason ye in your hearts whether it is easier to say "Thy sins are forgiven thee," or to say "Rise up and walk"? But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sin I say unto thee,'—and again He bent over my son and spoke with ringing clearness, 'Arise, and

take up thy bed and go thy way unto thy house.'

"We were all watching breathless. When the Master told my son that his sins were forgiven him a look of peace had swept over his worn face and a light of happiness had sprung into his eyes. But now, when the Christ said, 'Arise,' the sick lad immediately stood up, strong and well, and throwing the light mattress bed over his shoulder he walked out before them all, singing praises to God as we journeyed together to our home.

"The throng who watched and listened glorified God also, and as we climbed the hill behind the town we overheard men saying to each other in the streets, 'We have seen strange things to-day.'

"When we reached the home which had been so dark and sorrowful it seemed full of light, for my boy was as cheery and comforting as the sunshine.

"At last the dreams his mother and I made for him have come true, more beautifully than we planned. Not only does he work for me now and take care of the house, but he is al-

ways ready to help any who need him. We dreamed that he might become a prince's steward, but he has reached a greater position than that. He has become a faithful servant of Jesus Christ, and when he helps those who are poor or sorrowful he is working for his Master."

Luke 9:43-48
49-56

VII

THE GREAT HOUSE

BESIDE the road which ran from the fishing village to the lake there stood a great house built of white marble, surrounded by splendid gardens, belonging to a rich man who was called a Ruler. When the fishermen's children who passed on the road peeked over the wall, they caught glimpses of gorgeous flowers glowing between dark trees, sparkling fountains which kept the gardens cool, and brilliant peacocks strutting across the lawn.

Sometimes, late in the afternoon, they saw the Ruler's little girl standing among the blossoms. She wore a soft, embroidered robe, very different from Ruth's coarse blue frock or Nathaniel's brown one; her golden hair floated in the wind, and she always seemed to be listening to something the children could not hear. They never dreamed that she was listening to their merry voices,

and to the song they were apt to sing softly to themselves as they walked homeward, while the stars or the new moon shone faintly in the sunset sky.

Esther, that was the name of the child in the great house, loved the song more than anything she had ever heard, and by listening to it day after day she learned the words and the melody. She sang it one night to her father and mother while they sat in the garden beside a splashing fountain, the stars twinkling above their heads and a crescent moon shining golden against the purpling sky.

Esther watched the stars while she sang,

"Sleep little baby, lie still little sheep,
The stars are all dancing but babies must sleep."

When she sang,

"The bright moon is watching so babies may sleep,"

she smiled at the lovely moon, but when she sang the last verse a puzzled look came over her face.

"In the hush of its coming a new Star is born,
The Star of our gladness, the Star of Christ's morn."

"Mother dear, what does that mean?" she asked. "Every night since I first heard the fisher children sing those words I have watched for a splendid new star, but I never see it. It must be very wonderful, for when the children sing that verse their voices are so sweet that tears come into my eyes."

The mother did not know about the new star, but the father said he had overheard a fisherman's wife telling her child about a star which once shone when a baby was born. He had heard also that many of the sick and sorrowful people in the village had gone away, and returned cured and comforted by a great physician, whom they called the Christ.

"What the star has to do with the Christ I cannot guess," said the Ruler, "but to please you I will go down to the beach some day soon and ask the fishermen."

This father and mother loved their little Esther with all their hearts. She was their only child and they would have done or given anything to make her happy.

But when the father did question a fisher-

man it was not to satisfy his child's curiosity about the meaning of the song. With tears in his eyes and a trembling voice he asked Ruth's father if he could tell him where the great physician was, for Esther was very ill. She had caught the fever which comes so suddenly in the East, and for two days she had lain upon her bed tossing and moaning. The doctor from the next town had come and had shaken his head. If his medicine did not quiet the child there was nothing more that could be done, he said, and instead of getting better Esther grew steadily worse. There were only a few minutes during those long two days when she lay still, and they were while Ruth and Nathaniel walked along the road in the twilight singing the shepherd's lullaby.

"Hark," whispered Esther, and her moaning ceased as she listened.

> "Hush little baby, look up where on high
> The stars are all singing a new lullaby,"

sang the happy children and Esther, smiling,

lay very quiet. But when the singers had passed the bewildered, feverish look came back to the sick child's face.

"It is so dark," she moaned, "I cannot see any stars. When will the new star shine and make it light?"

The mother, frantic with grief, brought golden lamps and set them at the foot of Esther's bed. But the child, out of her head with fever, still complained of the darkness and tossed and moaned all night long.

At sunrise the father remembered the stories about the great physician, and hurrying down to the beach he found a fisherman, Ruth's father, who had just sailed back from a night's fishing.

"My little daughter is dying!" cried the Ruler. "Could the physician whom you talk about save her life?"

The fisherman told him about his own child, Ruth, how she had been cured, and urged the Ruler to hasten to a town some miles away in search of the Master.

The Ruler did not wait for any of the attendants who usually rode behind or beside

him. Mounting a horse he rode off at a gallop towards the town the fisherman had spoken of. There indeed he found the Lord, surrounded by many people who had met days before and waited for His coming.

The Ruler sprang from his horse, threw the reins to a boy, and wondered how he could make his way through the crowd. But when the people saw the look of sorrow upon the father's face they quickly stepped aside for him, and he fell at Jesus' feet crying, "My little daughter is dying; I pray Thee come and lay Thy hands on her that she may be healed, and she shall live."

At once Jesus came with him and the crowd followed. While they were travelling along the road, however, one of the Ruler's attendants came riding out to meet them. He dismounted beside the father and drawing him aside spoke the terrible words which the Ruler dreaded to hear.

"Thy daughter is dead," he said; "trouble not the Master."

But Jesus overheard the words and saw the look of anguish upon the father's face.

"Be not afraid," He said to him, "only believe."

And the Ruler, looking upon Jesus, believed, believed that his little girl now lying still as death would be roused back to life by that wonderful voice.

When they came near the great house they heard much weeping and wailing from the people who were paid in that country to come and mourn when any one died. But Jesus put them all out saying, "Weep not; the maid is not dead but sleepeth," and as they went they laughed, for they knew Esther was dead, and they did not believe in this strange physician with the glorious face and voice which all obeyed.

Into Esther's room Jesus went, taking with Him the mother and father. The mother felt as much in the darkness as her child had felt the night before.

"My bright little daughter has been taken from me," she moaned, "and my life is dark and desolate."

Over Esther's little figure Jesus bent. She was still and cold and wan, and the Master

was full of life and strength and power. He took her tiny hand in His strong one, and as if in a dream the child heard His voice speaking to her. Then she opened her eyes.

How dark the world had seemed when she closed them; not even a star could be seen and now,—was it the new star that was filling the room with light and gladness?

"Little maid, I say unto thee arise," said Jesus. She looked into His face, and then she understood the meaning of the children's lullaby. They had sung of this man, this Christ. It was no wonder their voices in singing of Him had been sweet enough to almost drive away that cruel fever, but He had driven it away forever and had given her back her life. Again He was speaking, telling the awe-struck mother and father to give her food so that they might see she was really alive and well.

Did her father and mother understand, too? wondered Esther. Did they know that this man, in whose eyes shone a light like the glory of heaven, was the Christ, over whose birthplace the star had shone?

She glanced at her mother; never before had she looked so radiant and so beautiful; and when she turned towards her father she saw that his face had caught some of the glory which shone from the eyes of the Master.

It was not just for that moment, when Jesus brought Esther back to life, that the glory came to them; they all knew it would be with them always, like a star of hope shining day and night forever.

Some hours later Esther lay in her bed again. The fragrance of the flowers drifted through her window, the stars shone brightly, and the garden outside was flooded with moonlight. Up the road from the beach walked the fisher children, and Esther, falling sweetly asleep, heard them sing the song which at last she understood.

"In the hush of its coming a new Star is born,
The Star of our gladness, the Star of Christ's morn."

VIII

MARY OF MAGDALA

OFTEN the children who stood upon the beach of the fishing village saw a gorgeous boat glide past. Its sails were of gleaming whiteness, its gilded bow shot through the waves like a shining arrow, and the sound of music echoed back to the listening children long after it was out of sight. It belonged to a beautiful lady and often it was her voice, singing, which floated over the waves.

The children enjoyed seeing the boat fly past, but after the first glance they never wanted to watch the lady who sat in the stern, her robes of crimson satin gleaming in the sunshine, her many jewels sparkling like bits of sea and spray. She had a hard, cruel face, for all her beauty, and the children felt that she disliked them as much as they feared her.

Sometimes they saw her drive through the fishing village in a splendid carved chariot drawn by two milk white horses. She lived in a town called Magdala, some miles beyond the end of the lake, and if the winds were contrary or the waves high she travelled in her swiftly drawn chariot instead of the golden ship. As she drove through the narrow streets, her unbound golden hair streaming, her jewels and gorgeous robes shining like bits of sunset, the mothers drew their children indoors, and the fathers turned away in disgust. They all scorned this proud and beautiful lady and Ruth once heard her father say, "I would rather see my little girl lying dead at my feet than have her grow up like lady Mary of Magdala."

For the lady was cruel and selfish and very wicked.

Once when Ruth's mother was standing in her home doorway the lady Mary passed, walking, and Ruth saw her mother draw back her skirt from the touch of the stranger's raiment as if it had been soot. Another time her chariot wheel struck a child, and as he

fell bruised and frightened Nathaniel heard the lady laugh and tell her driver to whip up the horses.

But a day came when, as the lady Mary of Magdala walked through the fishing village, the mothers opened their doors to gaze upon her, and the children followed and pressed closely about her. She was the lady of the golden ship and the milk white steeds, they knew; her robes were still soft and shining although no jewels hung as before from her neck and arms, but how different was her face! No longer was there a hard and cruel look about her mouth, and her great dark eyes, which had blazed with anger or impatience, were as beautiful as two clear stars. And there was something else about her face and gesture, something so sweet and winning that the children could not help but follow her, and Ruth heard one mother whisper to another, "She must have seen the Christ; none but He could work this great change."

Afterwards they learned the story of what had happened. Perhaps they heard it from one of the fishermen who, as followers of

Jesus, were present at the feast at Simon's house. It was the story which has been told and retold all over the world for hundreds of years, of how Mary of Magdala found the Christ.

No one knows where Mary first saw the Master. Perhaps it was on one of the mornings when, full of impatience and thoughtlessness, she had driven in mad haste through the fishing village. Galloping at full speed over the road beside the lake she may have seen a throng of people upon the beach, all listening to one man who spoke to them from a boat pushed out a little from the land. Hurrying past she caught one glimpse only of the speaker's face, but it was a face so glorious that it haunted her dreams, and made her suddenly understand how wicked and harmful her life had been.

I think she tried to forget that look of perfect goodness which made her sins seem so vile, and when she could not she was filled with misery. She wanted to see this Master again, to hear His voice, and she felt that she was too wicked to even enter His presence.

And then, perhaps, she saw Him one day at twilight when He was speaking to a crowd upon a mountainside, where in her restless agony she had gone to be alone.

This time she heard His thrilling voice, and His words seemed like an answer to her hopeless longing to go to Him.

"Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden," said Christ, "and I will give you rest."

Soon after a wealthy man named Simon, who lived either in Magdala or very near it, gave a feast and invited Jesus. He did not ask Him because he loved Him, but because he was curious to know what kind of man this strange new teacher, who drew throngs after Him, could be. And so, when Jesus and His followers came to the feast, Simon was not very courteous to them.

In that eastern country, instead of shoes, people wear sandals, which they leave at the door of the house and walk in barefooted. Often their feet are dusty, and a jar of cool water generally stands at the entrance, with

a slave beside it if the owner is a rich man, to wash the feet of the guests.

When Simon gave a feast to his wealthy friends not only was there a slave to wash their feet, there was perfumed oil for their hair, and Simon met them with a kiss of welcome.

But when Jesus entered the house there was no water for His tired feet, no oil for His head, and instead of greeting Him with a kiss Simon coldly motioned the Lord, who was greater than any prince or king, to a couch at the table. They all lay upon these couches as they ate, their feet uncovered.

The door was open, people passing could look in, could enter if they chose, and among those who pressed into the house for a glimpse of Simon's guest was the lady Mary of Magdala.

Ever since she had heard those words at twilight she must have longed to obey them and come, sinning and sorrowful as she was, to the Master. In her hands she carried a beautiful white box of perfumed oil, and as she stood at the foot of the couch where Jesus

D. G. Rossetti

"AMONG THOSE WHO PRESSED INTO THE HOUSE WAS
THE LADY, MARY OF MAGDALA"

lay, as she again heard His voice and saw His wonderful face, her sorrow that she was so unworthy to be near Him made her weep, and the tears fell upon Jesus' feet.

He must have noticed, must have known what a wicked woman she had been, but He did not send her away. In her shame and sorrow she stooped still lower until her long golden hair fell over the end of the couch; with it she dried Jesus' feet, wet with her tears, kissed them, and then breaking that white transparent box she anointed His feet with the precious ointment it contained.

Simon was horrified. "Surely," he thought, "this man if He were the Christ would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him, for she is a sinner." Jesus knew Simon's thoughts and answered them.

"Simon," He said, "I have somewhat to say unto thee." Then he turned for the first time and looked at the heart-broken Mary, who sat shrinking upon the floor hiding her face in her hands.

"Simon," He said, "seest thou this woman?

I entered into thy house; thou gavest Me no water for My feet; but she hath washed My feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest Me no kiss; but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss My feet.

"My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed My feet with ointment.

"Wherefore I say unto thee her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven the same loveth little."

And then to Mary He said,

"Thy sins are forgiven."

Not only Simon, but those who sat at the table, and all who stood about it listening, were too astonished to speak. "Who is this," they thought to themselves, "who forgiveth sins?"

But Jesus did not answer them. He was still looking at Mary, into whose face had come a light of hope.

"Thy faith hath saved thee," He said; "go in peace."

Then again the mothers and children of the fishing village in Galilee saw the lady Mary of Magdala, and her face, although marked with sorrow, shone with a light as if the glory of the Master was reflected there.

IX

A DANGEROUS JOURNEY

A MERCHANT travelling through the country told this story to the children by the lake; and afterwards they wondered if he himself were not the man who had taken the dangerous journey.

"In the city of Jericho there lived a merchant. Twice every year he went to Jerusalem to buy the goods which he sold; gay handkerchiefs for the children's heads, striped petticoats, and cloaks and shawls of rich dark colours.

"When he left the little store to seek more stock for it in the great city, his children were wild with excitement. To each of them he always brought back a present. That was exciting enough, but besides he would have stories to tell of what he had seen and heard upon his way. Many a dark stormy night the neighbours joined the children, as they sat cross-legged upon the floor, and listened fascinated to the stories of the merchant's journeys.

"One autumn, when he had ridden off upon his donkey with many plans of what he meant to bring home, he was a long time in returning. Day after day the mother and children watched anxiously for him, walking down the wide road beneath the fig trees until they reached the city gate. And then one evening, while they gazed longingly up the hill beyond the gray stone walls which surrounded the city, they saw a strange donkey approaching through the twilight. While they watched the rider waved his hand and they heard their father's voice call, 'Here I am at last. I thought I should never see my home again.' With cries of delight the children rushed up the hill to meet him, the mother with the baby in her arms following more slowly.

"'I have no presents for you,' he said, as two children clung to his stirrups, a boy climbed upon the pommel of the saddle, and another patted the donkey's nose.

"'But I have a story to tell which is more wonderful than the scarfs and the strings of beads I had bought,' he continued, kissing

each child and gazing at them with shining eyes.

"'If it had not been for a certain Samaritan the tale would not have ended as it has with a happy home-coming.'

"Then he slipped off the donkey to embrace his wife and tiny baby in his strong arms, and laughing, kissing, crying a little, and very happy, the family made their way to the empty store.

"It would remain empty for some time yet, the father explained, for his goods were all lost, and after supper, as they sat upon the flat roof in the moonlight, he told them this story of his journey.

"'I reached Jerusalem safely,' he said, 'and made many purchases, among them a costly new cloak and girdle for myself, which I put on so as to look very fine when you saw me again. Then, with both saddle-bags stuffed with goods to sell, I started homeward.

"'As I have told you before, the road from Jerusalem to Jericho is steep and wild, with great rocks behind which robbers lurk waiting to spring upon unguarded travellers.

But I have always ridden my humble beast along this road without any fear.

"'"Why should thieves trouble to rob a poor looking man like me?" I have thought; "from my shabby appearance they cannot guess that my bags are filled with anything except feed for my beast."

"'And so this time also I jogged on peacefully, forgetting my gay cloak and girdle which made me look far more prosperous than my worn cape, until, just as I reached a steep and rocky bit of road, the donkey shied and then stood still trembling. Behind a rock I saw something move; it looked like the figure of a man, but a moment later it was gone, the animal seemed to have forgotten her fear and we went forward at a brisk pace. At the foot of one of the hills I saw the figure again; he was moving stealthily from one rock to another, but suddenly he sprang into the road giving a shrill whistle, and in the twinkling of an eye we were surrounded with a fierce looking band of robbers.

"'I cannot tell you exactly what happened

next, it was all done so quickly that I felt as though I were having a bad dream which would soon be over. I only knew that they stripped me of all my fine clothes, and when I cried out at seeing my donkey with the saddle-bags led off behind the rocks, they beat me with their clubs until I knew no more.

"'I do not know how long I lay there, half dead, upon the roadside, but it must have been hours before I heard the sound of footsteps coming nearer and nearer. At first I thought the robbers had come back. I trembled with horror, and then, opening my eyes, I saw the splendid robes of a priest, glowing so brightly in the sunshine that they looked to my dim eyes like the wings of a gorgeous bird. The sight brought hope to my heart, and if I had had the strength I would have called a greeting. But as the priest was walking upon the side of the road where I lay I knew he could not fail to see me, and surely, I thought, he will help me in my sore need. But when he had come a few feet from me he suddenly stopped, and I saw an expression of disgust cross his face. He

looked at me for a moment as I lay there naked and bleeding, and then hurriedly he crossed over and passed by on the other side.

"'I did not faint again. I lay there, suffering and cold and desperate, longing for some other traveller, some man with a heart, to pass by and aid me. And as I waited, straining my ears for the murmur of an approaching traveller, I heard far off the sound of a horse's hoofs coming rapidly down the road. The sun was setting, and as I raised my head a little I saw a white horse prancing along in the golden light. Upon his back sat a rider in a white robe and turban. Tiny golden bells which jingled from his girdle sparkled in the sun's rays, and altogether it was the prettiest sight you can imagine. I think the rider must have been one of the singers in the temple at Jerusalem, for he was chanting, in a loud deep voice, a song which echoed among the lonely rocks. He was riding upon the other side of the road, but when he came opposite me he ceased his song and reined in his horse. Then he crossed over and bending down gazed at me.

I was too weak to speak. I just looked at him with pleading eyes, and then this beautiful youth who, as I thought, had ridden out of the sunset to my aid, shrugged his shoulders, turned his horse's head towards Jerusalem, and rode on, singing as he went.

" 'After that I gave up all hope. I closed my eyes, thought sadly of you, my dear ones whom I would never see again, and did not even notice that another traveller had drawn near and was bending over me. I paid no attention until a strong arm was placed beneath me, and even then I did not trouble to open my eyes. " In another moment he also will pass by on the other side," I thought. Then I felt soothing oil poured into my wounds, they were bound with soft bandages, a warm cloak was wrapped around me, and I was lifted gently and placed upon the back of some animal. At last I opened my eyes. Beneath me was a shaggy donkey and by my side, holding me upon the beast, walked a man with a quiet, kindly face. As I gazed at him he looked up at me and smiled into my questioning eyes. I was too weak to ask

him who he was, although I longed to know, and we travelled slowly on beneath the pale stars until we reached a little inn. There, with the landlord's aid, my rescuer carried me to a soft couch laid upon the floor and sat by my side all night, giving me quieting medicine and attending to my wounds.

"'The next morning he told me he must travel on and I was wondering how, with all my money gone, I could ever pay for my clothes and lodging at the inn, when I heard my friend say to the landlord, "Here are two pence. Take care of the wounded man, and whatsoever thou spendest more I, when I come back, will repay thee."

"'Oh, I felt so grateful to him, and I begged him to tell me who he was, thinking that if I knew his name and where he lived I might some day return his great kindness. But he only smiled and shook his head.

"'"I am thy neighbour," he said; "is that not enough?"

"'"My neighbour?" I questioned to myself as I lay in the inn getting back my strength.

"How can a man who lives far off in another country be my neighbour?" For I knew by his dress that he was a Samaritan. And then this thought flashed into my mind. The other two travellers came from my own country and yet this Samaritan was more like a good neighbour than either of them. Perhaps a neighbour is any man who helps those in need, and we also can be neighbours to those who, travelling through the country, stop to make purchases at our store.

"'In a few days I was well enough to travel. The Samaritan had not returned, but the landlord lent me a donkey to travel back upon, saying he trusted my friend to pay all I had cost him. And so I have come home to you with no presents and no goods to sell. But we will work hard all of us, weaving, spinning and embroidering, and soon we can open the store again.

"'And then, oh, my dears, whether we are big or little, let us never forget what it means to be a neighbour, and let us be friends to all those, wherever they may come from, who need our aid.'"

X

IN THE HEART OF THE STORM

UPON the beach, a short distance from the fishing village of which we have heard, there stood a small cottage, the home of a boy named Petrel. His father had been one of the robbers who hid behind the rocks on the Jericho road, and sprang out to attack and almost kill the poor traveller. After that the robbers had to flee for their lives, and Petrel's father never came back to the home on the beach where his wife, a beautiful Galilean girl, lived with her mother and the little boy. No one in the village knew where the robber father had come from. He had never been liked by the fishermen, and his boy looked so much like him with his olive skin, his flashing eyes, and his bushy eyebrows, that the villagers distrusted him also, calling him the "brigand's child," while even the children

looked at him with scorn mixed with a little fear. His poor mother watched anxiously for some months for her husband, until torn between her love for him and her shame at his cruel deeds she died, broken-hearted, leaving little Petrel alone with the feeble old grandmother.

So the lad grew up, a strange and lonely child, and although he went to school with the other children he never played with them, and as soon as lessons were over hurried back to the dreary home on the beach. In the afternoons he wove or mended fish nets, and while he worked he dreamed dreams which, if the children could have known, would have made them dislike and fear the "brigand's child" more than ever. He did not know what the name meant, but he understood the tone of scorn in which it was spoken, and with all the fierceness of his passionate little nature he hated these "pale-faced fisherfolk," as he called them to himself. His dream, day and night, was to grow up and travel across the mountains where in some rapid, magical way

he expected to become a powerful prince. Then he planned to return to this scornful little village, and vent his long pent up fury against the fisherfolk by driving his chariot wheels over the children, and making the men and women his slaves. The dream was as foolish as it was wicked, and when Petrel grew older and realized that it could never come true he changed his plan, and having learned that "brigand" meant a robber he decided that as soon as he was a man he would become one like his father, and rob and destroy the village which had treated him so unfairly.

In the meantime he was a clever fisherman, and the men often employed him to help them in their work. Sometimes as they watched the lad working sullenly, his brows drawn together in an ugly scowl, they remembered his lonely childhood and spoke some friendly word to him. But Petrel had come to detest them all so intensely that he rarely answered ; his only wish was to be left alone to dream his plans of revenge.

When the nights were too stormy for fish-

ing, and the fishermen were sleeping peacefully in their homes, Petrel would run up and down the beach, enjoying the roaring of the waves as the wind lashed them into wild fury. It was like the storm of bitterness which filled his heart, and he felt as if he were already a brigand chief, as fierce and cruel as the storm itself. But afterwards, when the storm had died away and he stood upon the beach watching the dawn break, while the morning star melted into the glowing sky and the waves lapped and murmured tenderly, he would remember his gentle, beautiful mother, and his heart would be filled with fear. If she could know that he, her only son of whom she had been so proud, was growing up like the father who had broken her heart, how miserable she would be. She seemed so near him as he stood there in the morning light that he felt sure she did know, and he would cry,

"Ah, mother, do not blame me! The storm in my heart is so fierce I cannot quiet it."

Then he would rush back to work upon

his nets, trying to forget the peaceful sky, the singing waves, and his mother's tender face.

One night while he was fishing with the men he heard them talking of the Christ whom, they said, would soon return to that part of the country. From the scraps of conversation Petrel overheard he learned that Jesus had cured a lame child belonging to one of the fishermen, and that many others in the village had gone in search of Him.

"Through His power," said one man, "the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have the Gospel preached to them."

Petrel, sitting silent upon the deck, listened to these words with astonishment, almost with dread. Again that strange fear came into his heart as if, like the peaceful sunrise and the memory of his mother's face, even the thought of this wonderful man made him ashamed of his spirit of revenge. At one moment he hoped that he would never see this Master, and the next he was filled with such a longing to find Him that before the

boat was fairly anchored he jumped into the shallow water and waded ashore.

"A curious lad that," said one of the fishermen. "I fear he will grow up into a lawless rascal, even worse than his miserable father."

All day Petrel walked, until as the sun set he reached a mountain beside the lake, the spot to which the fisherman had suggested sailing in search of the Master. It would have been a short sail but it was a long, hard walk, and as the lad reached the foot of the mountain he saw a throng of people scattering in all directions, many—the fishermen he worked with among them—embarking in little boats to sail home across the lake.

"So I have come too late," he thought bitterly; "it is just as well; the Master can have no message for a boy like me," and at that moment he saw a solitary figure climbing the mountain, the rays of the setting sun gleaming upon his flowing garments. Petrel watched the figure until it was out of sight, while a great wave of disappointment swept over him.

Only one little group of fishermen remained upon the beach. They were the disciples of Jesus, whom He had told to sail away without Him, and while they launched their ship they glanced occasionally at Petrel and spoke together in low tones. Just before they pushed off one of them walked over to the lad, who stood gazing at the mountain, his eyes full of tears, and asked if he would care to join them in their boat.

"We are in need of one more strong arm," he said, and Petrel accepted the invitation eagerly. To his surprise he found himself telling these strangers of his disappointment in having come too late to see the Master. They were evidently simple fishermen, most of them, like the men against whom Petrel had felt so bitterly, but there was a look of kindliness upon their faces which moved the lad strangely. They did not talk much and soon there was no time for words, for over the quiet sea there broke a sudden tempest. The lightning flashed across the black sky, the thunder crashed and the wind blew so furiously that the waves dashed into the boat,

until the fishermen lowered their sail, and every man, including Petrel, took an oar and rowed with all his strength. But it seemed hopeless. If the wind had been from the right direction they could have sailed across the lake in a few hours, but now, rowing against the wind, they made no progress, and every moment the storm raged more fiercely. Higher and higher rose the waves, black mountains of water breasted with foam which broke, one after another, into the boat, until it seemed as if the next would surely swamp her. The faces of the men grew white with dread, and then they cried out in terror, for they saw the fluttering of white garments in the distance, a figure walking upon the sea towards them until it seemed to pass them by. Then across the wild waves, clear and distinct through the roaring of the storm, came a voice which thrilled every heart.

"Be of good cheer," it said; "it is I; be not afraid."

The crested waves were still crashing into the boat, the mast was creaking as if it would snap before the fierce wind, and the light-

ning still flashed across the black sky. But the storm of bitterness in Petrel's heart had died away, and into the soul of every man in the tossing ship there had come a great peace and strength.

In answer to the Master's words a fisherman named Peter, seated beside Petrel, cried out, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water," and the voice answered, "Come." Over the side of the pitching boat Peter sprang, and while he gazed at the radiant face of Jesus who was drawing nearer to them, the disciple walked safely upon the water. But suddenly he stopped and looked, startled, at the black water beneath him; he felt the wind buffeting him, and the spray dashing upon him, and filled with fear he began to sink crying, "Lord, save me."

Immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught him saying, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Together they climbed back into the ship; the wind ceased, and the boat sailed quietly over the water.

Then they that were in the ship fell upon

their knees before the Master, saying, "Of a truth, Thou art the Son of God," while Petrel, filled with a happiness so great that he could not speak, gazed with shining eyes at Jesus, whose power could quiet not only a storm at sea, but the storm of misery within a human heart.

Years afterwards a stranger came to the fishing village, a man with an olive skin and such dark eyes and bushy eyebrows that he reminded many of the lad they used to call the "brigand's child." They were much puzzled by the likeness, still more so when they found the stranger also bore the unusual name of Petrel, for his greeting was so courteous and his words so friendly that all who met him felt sure he could have no connection with the robber's family.

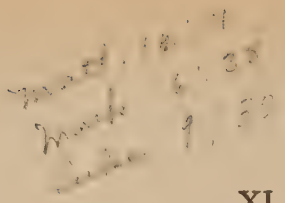
And then one evening upon the beach he told them the story of his life:

"I am still the 'brigand's child,'" he said, "and part of my dream has come true. I have indeed travelled beyond the mountains and returned here as I planned. Not as a

powerful prince, crushing all whom I meet," he said, smiling. "And not," he added gravely, "as the thief I might so easily have become. But I have lived in many robbers' caves and made friends among outlaws of all kinds. I had a faint hope of thus finding my father, and although I have not done so I have learned many lessons during my wanderings. One is that no man ever enjoys being mean and cruel. All whom I have met, and as I said I have known many who lived wild, lawless lives, did so to stifle the storm of bitterness or revenge which was raging in their hearts.

"And I have spent my life," he said simply, "in trying to lead these unhappy men to the Master who is able not only to quiet the raging of the sea, but to bring peace and hope to every man who has the courage to come unto Him, and the faith to listen to the words which I heard that night on the Sea of Galilee —

"'Be of good cheer, it is I. Be not afraid.'"



XI

ON THE MOUNTAINSIDE

THE same day that Petrel walked to the end of the lake, another boy rowed there across an inlet near the mountain. He had started, this other fisher lad called Philip, before sunrise, for he had a precious bundle wrapped up beside him in the stern, and it seemed to him as if nothing in the world could be as important as carrying it to the Master.

It was a tiny child, wrapped in so many shawls and cloaks that it was the shape of a ball, and only its little white face peeking out over the coverings showed that it was Philip's baby brother. He was a delicate, hump-backed child, the size of a big doll, beneath whose thin waxen skin blue veins showed, and whose dreamy eyes seemed to be looking far off at something no one else saw.

Philip adored him, and as his mother was

busy all day tending the other children, the big boy took all the care of the crooked little mite himself.

"What are you looking at, baby mine?" he would say. "Do you see the sunbeams dancing upon the bottom of the sea, do you listen to the song of the wind in the rigging, and do you long to fly like the storm birds right under the dashing spray?"

And the baby would smile his queer sad little smile, and fold his wee hand tightly around one of Philip's fingers as if he understood.

He could say a few words, but he could not walk a step, and the villagers shook their heads sadly when they passed him whispering, "He will never grow up."

If Philip overheard he would clutch the child to him, and drown the sob in his throat by whistling to make the little fellow smile. And then he heard of the Master, the wonderful physician who had cured many children, and who had journeyed to the mountain across the creek from their home to find rest.

"Surely," thought Philip, "even if He has

travelled into a desert place to be rid of crowds He will be glad to see my baby."

Many others thought the same thing of their loved ones. So that when Jesus reached the pebbly beach at the foot of the mountain, He found a throng of people waiting for Him. There were mothers bearing ailing babies, sons supporting aged parents, boys and girls and men and women, lame, blind, and suffering.

And when the Master saw them He forgot His weariness and was filled with sympathy.

"They are as sheep," He said, "having no shepherd," and He moved among them, healing, strengthening and comforting.

So when the keel of Philip's boat grated upon the beach, he found the Master not only there before him, but already surrounded with hundreds of sufferers.

"Will He not have time for my baby?" whispered the lad, and taking the child in his arms he stepped over the side of the boat, and placed the little cripple upon the sand where he could play with the coloured pebbles.

All day they stayed there. Over the whole

mountainside the crowd spread and when Jesus had healed them He talked to them, teaching them many things, while those who listened forgot the time of day, forgot how far from home they had travelled bringing no food with them.

But down on the beach Philip could not see or hear the Master. He did not dare make his way through the crowd to the Lord's side. "I am only a lad," he thought, "and the Master would not wish me to disturb His teaching. But the baby—if only He could see the baby! I am sure He would love its dreamy eyes, and would be sorry for it and make it strong like other children."

But the day passed, and the baby grew very hungry. Philip had not brought any lunch; he had not expected to be away so long, and although he could bear hunger for himself he could not stand seeing tears in his baby's eyes. In vain he built sand forts and pebble houses to amuse the child; the little fellow fretted and fussed, and at last throwing himself into his brother's arms burst into tears. Looking around in search of help Philip saw

another boy come running along the beach who, without waiting to find out whether he was disturbing the crowd, wriggled his way among them to see why they were gathered together.

Over his shoulder hung a forked stick with two fish, and he had a bag slung from his belt which looked as if it held small loaves of bread. If he had been just a little nearer Philip would have called out, begging him to give a bit to the sobbing baby, but already the lad had reached the centre of the throng, and Philip saw him speaking to one of the Master's disciples as if he knew him.

Then upon the mountainside the crowd divided and seated themselves and Philip, for the first time, saw the Master. He was standing in the midst and around Him, like flowers in a gay garden, sat the people in their brightly coloured garments. But in front of Jesus, placing the two fish and five barley loaves in His hands, stood the boy Philip had seen running over the beach. He did not seem to be afraid; he gazed up at the Master with the love of his whole soul

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"THE MASTER TURNED AND SAW HIM"

shining in his eyes, and, although Philip could not hear the words Jesus spoke, he knew by His face that He was speaking very lovingly to the lad.

Then, holding the loaves and fishes in His hands, Jesus looked up to heaven, blessed and broke them, and gave the food to His disciples to pass to the waiting crowds. Up and down the grassy aisles between the seated people passed the disciples, bearing baskets filled high with the bread and fish Jesus had broken. There was enough for all the thousands and to spare.

Philip could wait no longer. Here was a boy younger than he was who had dared make his way to Jesus, and the Master had not only welcomed him, He had taken his gift and blessed it to the hungry people, and He had smiled at the lad as tenderly as if he belonged to Him. Philip hugged the sobbing baby tightly in his arms, and with his heart beating very hard he climbed the mountainside; and the Master turned and saw him, a lad with a piteous face carrying a tiny crooked child in his arms.

An instant more, and both Philip and the baby were enfolded in the Master's arms. The lad was sobbing on Jesus' breast, sobbing for the joy and peace which had come to him. He had forgotten the great throng, forgotten the baby's hunger, forgotten everything except that here, nestled against the Master, was his baby, his, and yet how different. The little pinched face was rosy and smiling, the crooked back was straight, and when Jesus placed him upon the ground and put the tiny hand into Philip's the baby stood up and crowed with glee.

With the other lad's bread and fish Philip and the baby were soon fed, and while they ate they gazed rapturously at the Master.

What He said to Philip when, later, He bade him good-bye under the stars, the boy never told any one except the baby. But often, in the years afterwards, as the lad and younger brother played together upon the beach, watching the storms break, or the waves curl white in the sunlight, or the evening star reflected in the quiet water, Philip would say, "He is with us now, little brother;

do you not remember what He promised us?"

He told his mother the rest of the wonderful story, and when she saw the rosy baby she longed also to find the Master and thank Him for His great goodness. He had left that part of the country, but months after He passed near the lake again, and all the children who had known Him flocked to meet Him, among them Philip and the baby. That is another story.

XII

THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

ONE summer's morning a stranger, curiously and gorgeously arrayed, appeared in the streets of the fishing village. Over a crimson silk tunic he wore a gaily embroidered cloak, his white linen headpiece shone with gold and silver threads, and from his belt hung a huge pouch embroidered with every colour of the rainbow. The children, filled with curiosity and excitement, fairly tumbled out of their houses to gaze at him. "What can this splendid stranger wish here?" they whispered to one another, and after he had stopped to ask a lad where he could find the fishermen, the whole villageful of children followed the delighted boy as he led the visitor down the narrow path to the beach.

There they found many of their fathers cleaning and mending fish nets, or repairing the boats turned keel upward upon the sand.

They rose at the approach of the stranger and listened with interest to his request. He was a merchant, he said, and had come this way in search of pearls. Then opening his rainbow pouch he drew out a handful of such perfect pearls that the children, as well as the fathers, exclaimed with wonder.

"See," said the merchant, holding up one large gem for all to gaze upon, "you who spend days and nights in the open see many colours in the changing sky, and will understand why I call this gem, full of rosy colour, my pearl of the sunrise."

He replaced it and brought out another. "Your work carries you at all hours," he said, "upon the waves; and you watch them change from blue to green crested with creamy foam. This then is my pearl of the sea." Through the soft misty surface shone such lovely reflections of the waves' colours that one little child clapped her hands with delight.

"Yonder, against the turquoise sky," continued the merchant, "there stands a mountain crowned with gleaming snow. Does

this, my pearl of the snow-drift, not seem like a bit of the mountain top itself?" He held up a third pearl, its white frosty surface gleaming like moonlight upon newly fallen snow.

"Many more goodly pearls do I possess," said the stranger, "and yet I am never content. I am seeking a stone containing all these colours combined, a pearl which shall glisten like the snow, turn rosy as sunrise clouds, and gleam like the waves breaking under a blue sky. I know that such a gem would be of great price, but I am willing to sell all I possess to purchase it. Has any man among you seen or heard of such a one?"

The fishermen shook their heads. As they opened oysters upon the beach they had found many pearls, but they were generally small misshapen things, although their colours were pretty, and Ruth's most precious possession was a string of these which her father had spent years in collecting for her.

"There is a fisherman at the other end of

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Eugène Burnand

"I AM WILLING TO SELL ALL THAT I POSSESS TO PURCHASE THIS PEARL OF GREAT PRICE"

the lake," said one of the men, "who has found many wonderful pearls. He used to sell them to the lady Mary of Magdala, but she has left this part of the country; 'tis said she has become a follower of the Christ and her jewels are scattered among the poor and needy. Possibly if you journey to the home of this old fisherman you may find what you seek."

The merchant thanked the men and smiled gravely at the children. Although his gorgeous raiment and wonderful pearls fascinated them, they gazed at the man himself with awe; he looked so proud and stately with his deep-set dark eyes and flowing beard. They watched him, however, until he was out of sight, his robes gleaming like a hummingbird's breast, and wondered if they would ever see him again, or hear whether he found the perfect pearl for which he sought.

Days passed, and one evening a fisherman, who had taken his little girl and sailed across the lake to sell fish, came back with a strange and thrilling tale.

"I have seen the Christ," he cried, as his friends gathered around him. "He stood upon the mountainside, surrounded by crowds who had travelled from all directions in search of Him. When I joined them He was not talking about anything curious or hard to understand; He was speaking of things we see and work with every day, a fish net, a harvest, and the making of bread. He told us that the kingdom of heaven was like these things, very precious and yet simple and open to all. He said that it was also like a merchantman seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

"When he said these words I heard an exclamation of surprise behind me and turning I beheld the merchant who was here a short time ago. His eyes, which were gazing at Jesus, were burning with excitement. 'Ah, thou thyself shineth among men as this pearl of great price shineth among other gems!' he cried. Then I saw that he was holding in his hand a pearl so glorious that

if the eyes of the crowd had not been fastened upon the Master's face they would all have looked with wonder at this gem. It was large and perfectly round, and its colours were too beautiful for me to describe. Think of a rainbow glowing across the sky, and you can best imagine the hues which melted into one another in that wonderful jewel.

"Glancing at his pouch I saw that it hung limp and empty at his side, and I knew that he must have sold all he possessed to buy this pearl of great price.

"'The kingdom of heaven,' repeated the merchant to himself. 'Surely this gracious and kingly man is speaking of a realm over which He will rule. I will ask Him to let me join Him, for I, who have spent my life among all that is rich and rare, will certainly be given a high position in such a kingdom.'

"Possibly some of the disciples overheard the merchant's words, for I heard one of them say to the Master, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' and the merchant behind me leaned forward eagerly to listen.

"And then," said the fisherman, "what

happened next seems too wonderful to be true.

"For the Lord turned towards the spot where I was standing with my little girl, Hannah, and stretching out His hand called the child to Him. She is so shy and timid that, as you know, she flies from strangers, but at the Master's words she left my side and ran to Him as swiftly as a bird answers the call of its mate.

"Jesus took her in His arms and she nestled back as if she belonged there, while the crowd looked on, silent and perplexed. Then the voice of the Master rang out again:

"'Verily I say unto you,' He said, 'except ye become as little children ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven, and whosoever shall receive one such little child in My name receiveth Me; for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.'

"Again I heard the merchant give a sharp exclamation; but whether it were of disap-

pointment or merely astonishment I could not tell.

"'My pearl,' he murmured to himself, 'my pearl of great price,' and clasping the wonderful jewel tightly in his hand he turned and made his way through the crowd away from Jesus.

"The Master carried my Hannah back to me, and the smile He gave her in parting was like the sudden gleaming of sunshine through a cloud. I feel as if the memory of it and of His words would brighten our whole lives.

"But of the pearl merchant I know no more. He did not once turn to look back, and his brilliant cloak was soon out of sight around a curve in the road."

Months passed, and a season of want came to the fishing village. For the fishing was poor, the crops failed, and there were hunger and illness among the children.

Jesus had travelled across the mountains, and although the people often spoke of Him and longed for a sight of His face to comfort

them, He did not return to that part of the country.

And then, in His place perhaps, came the pearl merchant. He arrived at the village one evening at dusk, and his embroidered robe shone through the grayness like the wings of a gorgeous butterfly. He did not wait for the pale-faced children to come to their doors to greet him. As though he guessed what need there was in that sun-parched spot he passed quietly in and out of the homes, bearing not pearls in his rainbow pouch, but white bread and soothing remedies and gold pieces, one of which he left in the hand of each boy and girl.

Upon his face there was a smile as sweet and tender as the smile of a happy child.

"Some day," he said to little Hannah's father, into whose home he went last of all, "I hope to see the Master again. But already I have joined His kingdom, the kingdom of all who serve, for in ministering to little children I know that I am doing the work of my Lord.

"The perfect pearl has been sold," he

added, "because I have found something more precious and more beautiful. At last, indeed, little Hannah, my quest has ended, for I have learned that the Master, that peerless One, is Himself the Pearl of Great Price."

XIII

THE SPARROW'S NEST

FAR away upon a lonely hillside there was a tiny house nestled among the trees. It was so high up, and built upon such a steep bit of rock, that from the road below it looked like a big sparrow's nest clinging there. But it was not as cheery and cozy as the nest of any bird. A little girl lived there, a child who tossed and fretted with pain from morning to night, and her mother, although she nursed her as tenderly as she could, was very, very poor. She worked from early till late, weaving bits of cloth for a merchant in the town, but she only earned a few pennies, and the child's bed was hard, her blanket thin, and her food just crumbs which her mother picked up in the merchant's house where she sold her pretty stuffs.

They owned one goat and the sick child,

Miriam, drank its milk and patted its shaggy head, to keep from being too lonesome while her mother was away in the city.

Often at night, after the child had tossed herself to sleep, the mother would sit in the doorway, and looking up at the stars would wonder if any one in the world was as miserable and discouraged as she was.

"Each day my Miriam grows worse," she would moan, "and no one cares. When I try to tell the merchant's wife of my sorrow she will not listen, and I have no friends. Above the stars they say there is a God, but He is far away and my home, as small and mean as a sparrow's nest, will surely never be noticed by Him."

One afternoon the mother climbed down the steep path from the house, her bundle upon her back, her heart heavier than ever. As she turned into the highroad she saw in the distance a crowd of people, all looking up and listening eagerly to one man who stood upon a slight rise of ground near them.

His white robe fluttered against the blue sky behind Him, in the distance sparkled

the deeper blue of the seacoast, and around His head shone the golden light of the sun. His face was as full of light and hope as the sunshine, but the mother was too far away to hear His words, and she did not dare delay her errand to the town. The merchant was waiting for the scarlet cloth she had just finished, and she must hasten back to Miriam. So the mother hurried on. But she carried her burden more bravely and a faint smile lurked in the corners of her mouth. She could not tell why, but the mere sight of that gracious figure had given her courage.

Later, as she walked back along the same highway, the sun had set, and in a bush beside the road a sparrow was chirping its good-night to the stars. Then through the quiet air she heard a voice which she felt sure must belong to the glorious man she had seen that afternoon. Perhaps He and His companions had been listening also to the sparrow's sleepy chirp, for the mother overheard these words.

"Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings?" questioned the thrilling voice, "and

not one of them falls to the ground without your heavenly Father's knowledge. But even the very hairs of your head are numbered. Fear not, therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows."

Down the mother's face rained tears of joy. So the God in heaven was a Father, one who knew, and cared for, and understood all the sorrows of His children.

"Can I ever make little Miriam understand?" she asked herself as she hurried up the rocky path to the house.

But Miriam was too ill to understand any words, and for days afterwards her mother dared not leave her alone. In fits of misery the child threw herself wildly upon the floor, and it seemed as if no power on earth could quiet her. And then, when the mother was desperate, she remembered the calm, strong face of the man who had stood upon the grassy hill, and thought of His words which she had overheard in the starry road.

"If God cares He will send us help, perhaps by this very man, His messenger," she thought, and after locking Miriam into the

tiny one-roomed house, she hurried down the hill in search of Jesus.

She asked those whom she met upon the road who and where He was, and they directed her to a certain house where He was lodging. Into the city she ran, with bare brown feet, a purple handkerchief bound around her head by a yellow band, and a striped bodice. She looked very different from the Jewish ladies in their soft veils and robes, for Jesus had travelled north of His own country, and although this brown woman's heart beat with trust and love for Him, He was, she knew, a stranger in her land.

At last she saw Him in the distance, a white robed figure surrounded by His disciples, and she cried out saying,

"Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou son of David. My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil."

But perhaps to see how truly she believed in Him, the Master did not answer her a word. Down the narrow city streets she followed, still begging, still imploring His

aid, until at last the disciples, growing impatient, said to the Lord,

"Send her away, for she crieth after us." But still, although Jesus answered them, He did not speak to the woman, and reaching the house where He was staying He mounted the winding stone stairs leading up into an archway. Below, beneath the stairway, stood a group of hungry dogs to whom a servant was throwing the crumbs from his master's table.

Kneeling upon the lowest stone step the mother worshipped Jesus saying, "Lord help me!"

Then at last the Master answered with strange words.

"It is not meet," He said, "to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs."

"Can her trust in Him be so great that she still hopes He will help her?" asked the disciples to each other.

But looking down at the dogs below, and then up into Christ's eyes which were watching her as if reading her very thoughts, she answered:

"Yes, Lord, for even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their Master's table."

Jesus answered, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it done unto thee even as thou wilt!"

Joyfully the woman rushed back to the tiny house, and when she opened the door all was quiet and peaceful. No longer was Miriam moaning or tossing upon the floor; she had stretched herself quietly upon the bed, and had fallen into a gentle sleep.

And then that house was indeed like a real sparrow's nest, full of song and love and happiness. Miriam helped her mother with the weaving, and besides the merchant's goods, they made soft rugs and gay curtains and warm blankets for the home.

Every morning and evening they knelt upon the door-step, beneath the sunrise or the glowing stars, and thanked their heavenly Father who had sent them Jesus, in whose sight even the sparrows are precious.

XIV

A MOUNTAIN TOP AND A VALLEY

IT was on the slopes of a beautiful mountain whose summit glistened with a mantle of snow, that the fishermen, James and John and Peter, saw a glorious vision. They had been with Jesus as He taught and healed in the hot, crowded towns, and at last, when they were nearly exhausted by the noise and turmoil and great heat, Jesus had taken them with Him up the wonderful mountain.

It was afternoon when they started, and they climbed until the sun was sinking behind the snow-clad peak, just above the cool and dewy pastures where they would spend the night. That was the last picture in the fishermen's minds when, wrapped in their warm cloaks, they fell asleep upon the soft grass, the golden sun sinking behind the glittering snows.

How long they slept they did not know, but awaking suddenly from a deep slumber they saw before them a marvellous sight. Upon the grass and tiny mountain flowers knelt the Master, His face shining like the light of the setting sun, His white robes glistening like the snow-crowned summit. The brightness of His form made the dark mountainside as light as midday, and with Him stood two glorious angels, talking with Him about some great trial through which He must soon pass.

As the fishermen watched, the angels departed, and Peter, bewildered and excited, cried out, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; let us make three temples, one for Thee and one for each of the angels to abide in!"

But while he spoke a glorious cloud overshadowed them, and out of its radiance came a voice, the voice of God, saying, "This is My beloved Son, hear Him."

Filled with awe the fishermen fell upon their faces on the grass, and not until Jesus touched them saying, "Arise and be not afraid," did they open their eyes. Then they

saw before them the Master, alone; from His face and garments the dazzling brightness had faded, and only the light of the stars shone peacefully upon the mountainside.

Gradually the day dawned, and still questioning Jesus about the meaning of the mysterious vision, the fishermen walked back with Him to the valley below. And there, while above upon the mountain had been light and glory, was a scene of sorrow and agony.

A great multitude had collected around the followers of Jesus whom He had left the evening before. They were saddened and disheartened, and the crowd was questioning them scornfully, while among them stood a man, his face lined with misery, half holding, half supporting in his arms a sick boy.

When the throng saw Jesus they ran to meet Him and the man with the suffering lad cried out, "Master, I beseech Thee to look upon my son, for he is mine only child, and behold a spirit taketh him and suddenly crieth out, and it teareth him so that he

foameth again, and bruising him, hardly departeth from him. And I besought Thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not."

Then while the father carried his poor, miserable son to Jesus, the boy fell upon the ground in a fit, foaming at the mouth. The crowd pushed back in horror but the Master drew near and stood by the lad's side.

"How long is it since this came unto him?" He asked the father, and the man answered piteously, "Since he was a child; and ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire and into the water to destroy him, but *if Thou canst* do anything have compassion on us and help us."

"*If thou canst* believe," answered Jesus; "all things are possible to him that believeth."

The father gazed longingly into the face of the Master, and the strength and peace and beauty which he saw there sank into his very soul.

"Lord I believe; help Thou my unbelief!" he cried.

The crowd had been growing larger and drawing nearer and nearer to see and hear what was happening. They saw the Master turn again to the wretched, writhing boy and heard Him exclaim in His ringing voice, "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee come out of him, and enter no more into him."

As the watching people leaned forward, breathless with excitement, a wild cry came from the suffering lad, and then he lay upon the ground, no longer foaming and tossing with agony, but so still and white that many whispered, "He is dead."

But the Master was bending over the little figure, and taking the boy's hand He lifted him up, put His arm tenderly around him, and gave him back, sound and well, to the father, into whose face had come a look of radiant joy.

It was Peter who, years afterwards, told the story of these wonderful doings to the people of Galilee, and when he had finished many exclaimed, "Ah! Peter, how terrible it

would have been if the Master had done as you suggested, remained above upon the dazzling mountain top in company with the angels, while below in the valley the boy tossed in an agony which only the Master's touch could cure!"

XV

THE LIGHTING OF THE GOLDEN LAMPS

THIS story was told beside the lake some time after it had happened, by one of the sufferers who was in the procession which Nicodemus met travelling down the hillside in search of Jesus.

"Among the Pharisees living in Jerusalem there was one named Nicodemus who, unlike most of the others, longed to help the world. Around him he saw sorrow and wickedness, and he hoped that if he studied the wisest books deeply he might learn the secret of how to bring light into lives now filled with darkness. So he spent years and years among his books, long strips of parchment rolled upon carved and gilded sticks; but although he learned many things from them he did not find a trace of the secret for which he was seeking.

"Then one day as he walked through the

city streets he saw a young man healing the sick and afflicted people who were brought to Him. Nicodemus was filled with astonishment, and when he gazed into the wonderful face and listened to the teaching of the Master, he was even more amazed.

"'Surely,' thought the Pharisee, 'this must be a teacher come from God! Possibly from Him I may learn the great secret of how to lift the misery of the world.'

"So Nicodemus visited Jesus. But he did not dare go in the daytime, for the Scribes and Pharisees looked with mingled fear and scorn at the young Galilean prophet; and so one night, while the Master sat upon the roof of the house where He was staying, a man wrapped in a long cloak of fine soft material stood before Him. It was Nicodemus, who had climbed the outer stairway leading to the housetop, and standing before Jesus he questioned Him; reverently, because he knew the Master was the most marvellous teacher he had ever listened to, and timidly, because he knew that if his friends saw him there they would be filled with anger.

"Then upon that housetop, beneath the stars, Jesus taught Nicodemus more wonderful truths than any he had found in the books written by the wisest men. The great student listened with astonishment, for the teaching of Jesus was not of hard rules and deeds to be performed which would bring happiness, but of hearts filled with the spirit of love. One could not see such a spirit, the Master said, any more than one could see the wind which was then blowing lightly over the roofs, bringing cool, fragrant air from the surrounding hills to the hot city.

"'The wind bloweth where it listeth,' said Jesus, 'and thou hearest the sound thereof but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the spirit.' Men with hearts full of that spirit, He said, loved the light, because their deeds were good, 'wrought in God,' and they were not afraid, but those whose hearts were evil loved darkness, because their deeds were evil. 'Light has come into the world,' said the Christ, 'but some men love darkness rather than light.'

"Home under the paling stars, with the wind still blowing softly in his face, walked Nicodemus, his mind full of strange new thoughts. So it was not through great learning after all that the happiness for the world was to be found; and although the Pharisee did not yet understand how the cloud of misery was to be lifted, when he thought of the Master he felt sure that if only he could understand all the words Jesus had spoken he would find the secret for which he longed.

"After that night he read no more in his precious rolls of parchment. Instead he walked often upon the hills about the city, drinking in the splendour of sunrise and sunset, learning from the mystery of the stars, the radiance of the moon, and the song of the wind, much that he had never dreamed of before. Could the secret of happiness be found, he questioned, in living always close to the beauty of the world instead of to the learning of the ages? And then as he wondered, he returned one evening down the hillside, and met a pitiful procession.

Over their heads the sun was setting gloriously, but it brought no happiness to the miserable crowd. Some were cripples, others blind, others deaf and dumb, and many, too ill even to stand, were carried upon mats and stretchers. 'No learning and no beauty can bring peace to these suffering hearts and bodies,' thought Nicodemus. 'I am farther than ever from the solution of the riddle, and I doubt if even the young Prophet Himself could aid these wretched ones.'

"That night there was a great feast in the temple, and the outer court was crowded with hundreds of people who had come from all over the country to worship. Among them stood Nicodemus. The sky was very dark, not a star was shining, and he could not even see the faces of those around him. Suddenly the two huge golden lamps which stood on columns upon each side of the marble stairway were lighted, and over the multitude, over the great city and the hills beyond, flashed the brilliant lights. From the people around Nicodemus there rose a song of thanksgiving, a beautiful psalm

which flooded the temple with music and joy.

"'The hearts of hundreds in this city are as dark as was the court before the lamps shone forth,' exclaimed Nicodemus, 'and what we are all longing for is a light of love which will stream unto our lives, filling them with a radiance such as now illumines the whole temple.'

"Then a stillness fell over the joyous throng, and all faces turned towards one man in a white robe who stood upon the great stairway, the light from the magnificent lamps falling upon Him. Nicodemus gave a gasp of wonder, for this gracious figure was the young Prophet whom he had visited months before upon the housetop.

"'I am the light of the world,' rang out the clear voice; 'he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.'

"'It is He,' whispered many around Nicodemus. 'It is the Lord, the Master who healed us! Come, let us follow Him.'

"The Pharisee looked about him, and to

"I PERISH WITH HUNGER"

J. M. Swan

his amazement he recognized, in the well, strong men and women surrounding him, those sufferers who had made up the sorrowful procession he had met that day at sunset. They had come to Jesus, and He had cured them, bringing light and joy into their dark and miserable lives.

"And so at last Nicodemus found the secret for which he had searched in vain. Hurrying after the happy people he also found the Christ and served Him, not only then, but months afterwards, when to be known as a follower of Jesus brought danger to any man, and most of all to one who, like Nicodemus, was a Pharisee of high position."

XVI

IN A FAR COUNTRY

MANY in the crowds who listened to Jesus returned home and repeated to their children and friends the stories they had learned from the Master. They could not tell them as Jesus did, with such power and feeling that each person in the throng felt it was all spoken directly to him, and so, to make the tales seem anything like as real to their hearers as He had done, those who retold them added a little here and there, describing the pictures they had in their minds while Jesus spoke.

The following is the way the fishermen's children heard some of the tales from their fathers, who had learned them first from the Master.

"In a splendid house there once lived a father and two sons," said a fisherman, and the children crept close to him upon the sand, listening, while their eyes never left his face.

"It was the most gorgeous house you can think of," he continued. "It was built of shining marble, and was full of soft carpets and tapestry hangings and heavy carved furniture. In the centre was a courtyard filled with fragrant flowers and sparkling fountains, and there in the moonlight the father would sit with his two sons.

"He loved them both dearly, and out of his treasure he had given them all, he thought, that heart could desire. They had trains of servants to wait upon them, ate the daintiest food out of silver dishes, and drank from golden cups. Each rode a fine horse with glittering trappings, carried a sword whose hilt shone with precious stones, and wore chains of wrought gold around his neck.

"When they rode out hunting, ladies would draw aside their curtains to gaze at them, and many a flower dropped from an unseen hand at the younger brother's feet. He was so gay, and handsome, and charming, that every one who saw him loved him, and wanted to listen again to his merry laugh and courteous words.

"The older brother was more severe, and less restless than the younger son, who was not content although the father gave him everything he asked for.

"'I want to see the world,' he said one evening to the father as they sat in the quiet courtyard, where lanterns glowed among the orange trees and music mingled sweetly with the ripple of the fountains. 'I long to have a great adventure,' continued the lad, 'and I am tired of living at home. Father, will you not give me the portion of goods which will belong to me after you die and let me go away now, while I am young, to make my name and fame?'

"When morning broke the father sorrowfully opened his treasure chests and took out shining gold and gleaming jewels. Gaily the boy filled his pouch and saddle-bags with them, and rode away down the road in the sunshine. He never once turned to look back at the father, who stood in the archway of the splendid lonely house, watching until his son was out of sight.

"'Of what use are all my beautiful posses-

sions to me,' cried the father, 'if I lose the boy who is the joy of my life?'

"Morning and evening he stood there at the golden gate, dressed in his gorgeous flowing robes, watching for his boy. 'The poorest fisherman who sees his son coming home to him is happier than I!' he would cry, while his face became lined with care, and his hair and beard white with grief; for the boy did not come.

"And the boy, what was he doing?

"Gaily and proudly he rode away to a far country, and there he was welcomed, as he felt sure he would be, by the richest men and the most beautiful ladies. They admired his courtly manners, his fine robes and his charming face, and most of all they enjoyed the way in which he spent his money. For he invited these new friends to splendid banquets and entertainments of all kinds, and while he was feasting and revelling, flattered and admired by all, he forgot the great adventure he had started out to seek.

"And so the days and nights passed by merrily, until one morning the younger son

awoke and found that his pouch and saddle-bags were empty; of his father's gift there was not a penny left.

"At first he was startled and then, remembering his many friends, he thought 'Surely they will help me after all I have done for them.' So he sprang upon his horse and rode from one great house to another; but as soon as the friends heard the lad's request for money they turned him from the doors and would not listen to his entreaties.

"To pay for his lodgings, the boy sold first his horse, then his sword and his jewels and his fine clothes, until at last, dressed in rags, he had nothing left. To make matters worse there began to be a famine in that country, and even the rich men had a scanty supply of food upon their tables. But the boy was starving, and when he asked the same friends who had refused him money to give him work, they only laughed at him.

"At last he found a man who told him scornfully he might go into the fields and take care of the pigs if he wished." (In that country they call pigs "unclean" and never

speak of them if they can help it, so this was the most disgraceful work a man could be given.) "The boy was so hopeless that he was glad to do even that, and he sat upon the burnt up grass watching the greedy animals gobble the dry husks, so hungry that he would have been glad to eat those coarse pods, and still no man gave him anything to eat.

"Picture him sitting there in rags, cold and starving and heart-broken with loneliness. He may have thought bitterly of the great hopes with which he set out, hopes high enough to conquer the world, and this was all they had come to. He thought of his father and a great wave of shame swept over him.

"'How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare,' he cried, 'and I perish with hunger.' Then he sprang to his feet exclaiming, 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants.'

"So over the fields he rushed, and all day

he travelled along the road, until as the sun was setting he arrived, footsore and weary, in sight of his father's splendid house. 'Will my father speak to me?' he wondered, and when he looked down at his bare and bleeding feet and his miserable rags, he hung his head with shame and misery.

"But when he was yet a great way off his father saw him, and although no one else would have recognized, in the wretched downcast lad, the gay and handsome youth who had ridden away, the father knew him, and with a heart full of compassion he ran down the road and fell upon the boy's neck, and kissed him.

"And the son said, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.' He was going to add, 'make me as one of thy hired servants,' but the father turned and called the attendants who were standing around the arched doorway.

"'Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him,' he said, 'and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the

fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and be merry. For this my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found.'

"So through the great house, into the fragrant courtyard, the lad was led, and there, while the moon rose and the fountains splashed, he told his father in shame and sorrow the story of his wanderings.

"And this," he said in ending, "is after all the great adventure; the home-coming to one's father who has watched and waited and never forgotten his boy, and whose love is as deep and tender for the lonely ragged outcast, as it was for the happy youth surrounded by admiring friends."

XVII

TEN PIECES OF SILVER

WHILE the children waited upon the beach for their fathers' boats to come sailing home, they begged one of the mothers, who sat in their midst with her baby in her arms, to tell them a story. She had heard a tale from the Master, and she wondered how she could tell it so that the children would understand. As she pondered she gazed out to sea, and in the distance she saw a little boat with a snow white sail flying over the waves. It made her think of a way of telling the story she had in mind, and this is what she told.

"A little boat with torn sails, a broken mast, and the name, *Sea Gull*, painted upon her stern, was being towed slowly into a harbour. Upon the beach stood a quiet, mournful little group of children watching her.

"'She looks like a bird with a broken wing,' said the eldest girl, whose name was Esther, and tears came into her eyes and trickled down her cheeks. The other children were her brothers and sisters, and the *Sea Gull* belonged to their father, who earned the money which fed and clothed them by fishing from the little boat. The night before there had been a storm; in the darkness the fisherman had steered out of his course, and the *Sea Gull* had struck upon great reefs. While she stuck fast with the water pouring into a hole in her bow, the wind had snapped the mast and torn the sail to ribbons. The fisherman had been rescued by another boat, and now, through the mist of early morning, the friend who had saved him was helping him bring home the forlorn little *Sea Gull*.

"When the father reached the shore he looked as miserable as the children. They mourned over the damage to the graceful boat which had spread her sail so gaily and floated over the waves like a bird, for they loved her as if she had been one of them. But the father thought of the hungry mouths to be

fed, and wondered how he could ever earn enough with which to repair the boat.

"Together they walked slowly homeward to tell the mother the sad news. Her eyes were as blue as the sea waves when the sun shone upon them, and the children had never seen them clouded or filled with tears.

"'Mother will cry now,' the littlest boy, Paul, had sobbed, and he hung back behind Esther as if afraid of such a sight. But when she heard the news the mother's blue eyes were sweet and serene still, and she smiled at the children mysteriously as if she had a secret which she could not tell them before their father.

"The next morning, while they were still asleep, the fisherman was off in search of work in the neighbouring town, and while they ate their bowls of bread and milk their mother told them her plan, which sounded to their ears like a wonderful fairy tale.

"'Father may be gone for several weeks,' she said, 'and while he is away we will all earn money enough to repair the *Sea Gull*.' Then she suggested ways in which every one,

even the baby Paul, could earn something, and, their breakfast finished, they all rushed off to see what they could do that very day.

"As the sun set they came back with shining faces, and each one carried some earnings lovingly in his hand. The oldest boy, James, had found work with a potter. All day he had turned the wheel, while against it the potter held a lump of clay with a hole in the middle into which he placed his hand, moulding the clay from the inside, as the wheel ground the outside thin and smooth. While James helped him he had moulded big water jars and small drinking cups and bowls.

"'He has promised that some day he will give me a bit of clay to work myself,' said the happy boy, 'and I shall mould a little boat like the *Sea Gull*.'

"Esther and John and Martha had been helping the fishermen mend their nets upon the beach, and besides the tiny coin each held in their hand, the men had said that when the *Sea Gull* was whole and beautiful again, the children should have one of the very nets they had mended to place upon her deck.

"Paul had spent the day picking up shells, and he had found such lovely ones, pink and snow white and shining yellow or silver like bits of money, that after they were strung his mother was sure some passing merchant would buy them. She did not tell what she herself was doing, but each morning after they had hurried off she opened a cupboard and unrolled a huge bundle of snow white canvas. Most of the boats had orange or brown sails, but the *Sea Gull's* sails had been as white as a gull's wing, and out of the canvas the mother was making a new pair of wings for her. The merchant from whom she bought the material had told her she could pay him the next time he travelled past, and after the children were asleep she worked for hours by candle-light over something she hoped would sell for enough to pay for the canvas and the new mast. The children's money could not do more than pay for the broken bow. This other work was so beautiful that when at last the children saw it finished they clapped their hands with delight.

"'It is the *Sea Gull* herself!' they cried,

for upon a large square of blue silk the mother had embroidered a ship, whose bow dipped into the foam, whose sails were wide spread to catch the wind, and upon whose stern was embroidered in tiny gold letters *Sea Gull.*

"She sold it to the merchant for the price of the canvas and eight pieces of silver, just enough, with the two silver pieces the children's coppers had been changed into, to rig up the little boat as if she were new.

"They all counted the coins over and over, clinking them in their hands, and flashing them in the candle-light which made them glitter like gold. The children's eyes twinkled with merriment and their gay laughter filled the house.

"'She will be painted white and the birds will think she is one of them,—their queen perhaps,—and perch upon her mast!' cried Esther.

"'Her bow will be so strong and her bowsprit so straight that she will sail safely over the biggest wave in the world,' said James. 'And our fish net will catch more fish than all the other boats put together,' added Martha.

"In their joy the children danced and sang

and laughed, until the moon was high and their mother put them to bed.

"'To-morrow we will take the money to the boat builder that he may begin upon the work at once,' she said as she kissed them good-night.

"But when she counted over the splendid pieces of silver, with which the children had been playing, one had vanished and she found only nine. Into every crack and corner she hunted, behind the chests which held the clothes, under the mats upon the floor, in every bowl and dish,—it was not there! Into her clear eyes there came a cloud of fear. In two more days the fisherman would be home, and if the boat were not dancing upon the waves in readiness for him the children's hearts would be broken. They had worked so hard, and she had put all her skill and strength into the task she had finished. It could never be done over again.

"She lighted a fresh candle and swept every inch of the little house, except beneath the great mat on which the children were lying asleep. She could not bear to wake them with her bad news until morning.

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Eugène Burnand

"REJOICE WITH ME," SHE EXCLAIMED, "FOR I HAVE FOUND THE PIECE I HAD LOST"

"With the first ray of light she was up and hurried the sleepy bewildered children out to play upon the beach, but they sat there in a solemn, fearful group too sad even to talk about the lost money. Again the mother lit a candle that its light might shine into the dark cracks, and suddenly, beneath the spot where the baby boy Philip had slept upon the mat, she saw something glimmer. She swept over the place; there was a clink, clink, and before her eyes lay the missing coin! It was so like one of his shining shells, that feeling as if it belonged to him, the little boy had gone to bed there holding it tightly in his hand. When he fell asleep his hand opened, the coin dropped and rolled into the crack.

"Oh, how blissful the mother was! She rushed to the one wide window and held it up for the children to see. 'See,' she cried, 'I have found it!'

"Down the street the neighbours heard her glad call and ran to see what had happened.

"'Rejoice with me,' she exclaimed, 'for I have found the piece I had lost!'

"Two days later a little boat with *Sea Gull*

painted upon her stern rocked merrily upon the blue waves. On the beach stood the neighbours watching, while a fisherman, his face beaming with smiles, hoisted a snowy sail, and with his wife and children beside him sailed out into the sunshine. The bowsprit gleamed, the children sang, the mother smiled, and the father, waving gaily back to his friends, was the proudest, happiest fisherman upon the shore."

The mother paused there and looked out over the lake, into whose waves the glory of the sunset sky was already reflected, making it glow as if millions of roses were growing beneath the water.

"She found that which she had lost," the mother repeated to herself. Then into her face came a light like the glowing sea, and she added softly as if for her the words had a meaning deeper than any knew, "And Jesus said, 'Even so I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.'"

XVIII

A PRAYER IN THE TEMPLE

ONCE, in the city of Jerusalem, there dwelt a man who was very rich. He lived in a fine house, was waited upon by trains of servants, and wore gorgeous robes and shining jewels. He thought there was no one in the city as important and righteous as he. To show people how good he was, he went without dinner twice a week, washed his hands many times a day, and if, while walking through the city, some one who was poor or shabbily dressed touched him, he sent his servant at once to bring him water to wash off the unclean touch. Whenever he filled a bag with a hundred pieces of shining gold, he counted out ten of them and slipped them into his pouch. Then dressed in his finest robes, jewels flashing from his collar and hands, he would march to the great temple where all the city gathered to pray. It had several courts, and in one of

them were high chests shaped like trumpets, where offerings were placed for the support of the temple.

The rich man would wait until his friends were looking, then very proudly he would step across the court, open his pouch, and place ten large gold pieces in one of the chests. Still standing beside it he would pause, listening to his friends who were sure to say in loud whispers: "What a generous man he is! What a magnificent gift!" And he would feel more righteous than ever. Then leaving the court, he would pass into the temple itself to say his prayers.

One day while he stood there in the great building, with priests in gorgeous robes passing in and out, incense rising in clouds from the altars and a choir of boy's voices singing in the distance, he thought of the people he had passed on his way through the city. He had seen many miserable, ragged men who looked as if they had made a failure of their lives, and men who were known to be cruel, or unjust, or hard-hearted. Standing upon the opposite side of the temple, half hidden be-

hind a marble pillar, stood a tax-gatherer whom many people hated because he had to take money from them, although he did his work as honestly and gently as he could. As the rich man looked at him he scorned him.

Then the proudly righteous man raised his eyes towards heaven, hoping that as he did so the golden light from the high windows would fall upon the jewels in his turban, and the coloured embroideries upon his robe. And he prayed in a loud voice so that all might hear him and say, "What a pious man he is! How beautifully he prays!" But all the time in his heart he was saying, "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are, dishonest, mean, cruel, or even as this tax-gatherer. *I* fast twice a week, *I* give away a tenth of all I possess." He felt very important and pleased with himself and he was sure that in God's sight he must look very splendid.

And the tax-gatherer, standing afar off behind a pillar, would not lift as much as his eyes to heaven. He was dressed in a dark robe and his pouch hung empty at his side.

All that day he had been working, collecting taxes, and although as he went from house to house the people feared him, he was followed by a crowd of children. When he looked at them there was such a light of love and merriment in his eyes that they all adored him. He swung them upon his shoulders, told them stories of the strange, shy animals he had seen upon his travels, and when he left them they clung to him begging him to come again.

As he stood in the temple he thought of these children with their bright eyes and merry smiles and dancing feet. He thought also of the patient mothers he had seen, who without a murmur bore pain and sorrow and poverty, and of the fathers who spent their lives carrying heavy burdens for the sake of their families. With his whole heart he longed to be as pure and loving as the children, as patient as the women and as brave as the men. He felt sure that in God's sight they were far nobler than he was, and beating upon his breast he cried in a smothered voice, "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

Then out into the twilight walked the rich man and the tax-gatherer. As they stepped down the great marble stairway many turned to bow low before the man whose flowing robes and sparkling jewels showed him to be one whom men called a Pharisee. No one looked, except with scorn, upon the other figure, wrapped in his dark cloak, but as he reached the road a child's voice piped through the dusk, "Here he is," and many little feet hurried through the gathering darkness toward the tax-gatherer, until a throng of children surrounded him and followed him gaily down the street.

And in God's sight one of these men was forgiven and accepted, and the other, who thought he was so righteous, appeared more miserable than the meanest sinner in Jerusalem.

XIX

A HIDDEN TREASURE

"I ONCE heard the Master explain to a crowd how precious is the kingdom of heaven," said a shepherd. "He said it was like something a man once found in a field, and as He told the story I imagined a poor peasant walking along a road, his ragged cloak drawn tightly about him, his head and shoulders bent. He looked both cold and unhappy, and he gazed so longingly at a barley cake, which a boy who passed was munching, that he must also have been very hungry. He soon left the road and walked half-way across a field, among whose waving grass bright flowers shone like jewels.

"'If only they were jewels!' sighed the man. 'Then I could sell them and take back food and clothing to my needy family; but as it is I have nothing for them unless I can find here a few roots which may be made into a savoury broth.'

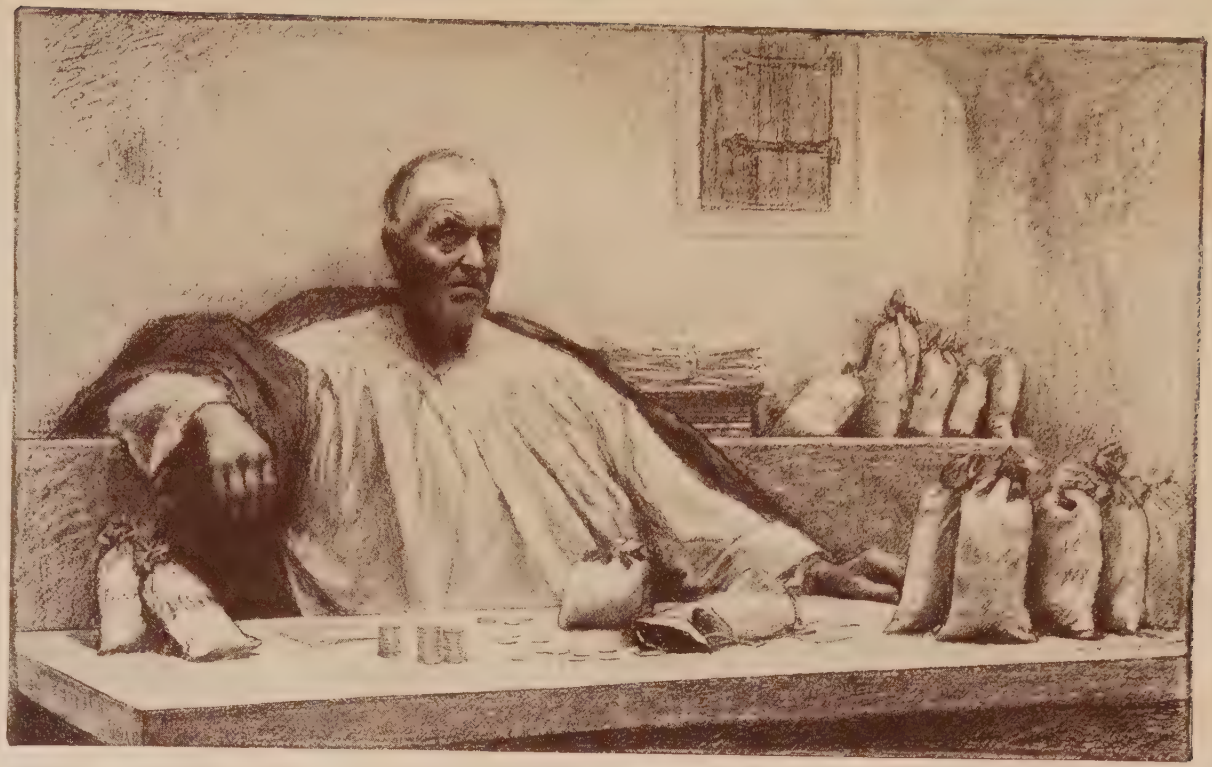
"As he spoke he knelt among the flowers and began to dig with a large knife he carried in his belt. Then suddenly *clink, clank!* rang out as the blade struck something hard, deep down in the earth. The man looked puzzled at first and startled; then he threw down the knife and scooped out the dirt with his hands until, where the blade had struck, he felt a sharp corner of iron. Still larger he made the hole until he found an iron ring, and grasping it firmly he pulled with all his strength until slowly, the earth and pebbles falling from it, he drew up a small chest.

"He looked around hurriedly to see if any one was passing, and making sure that no one was near he knelt down beside the box and tried to open it. As he pushed his knife beneath the edge of the cover the lid fell back, grating on its rusty hinges, and the man sprang to his feet in amazement. Above him the brilliant colours of the sunset streamed across the sky, and within the chest those same glorious clouds seemed to have dropped in tiny bits, which sparkled and

glowed as brilliantly as the sky above them. Dazed and bewildered the man put out his hand and touched those bits of colour, and then he knew that instead of a magic box of sunset clouds he had discovered a chest of precious and priceless jewels.

"Years and years before a rich man, a miser, had lived in a house near this field, and the peasant, as well as all his neighbours, knew the selfish old man's story. He had no family, nor relatives, nor friends. He had thought of nothing but collecting great possessions, and even when his barns became so full of fine fruits and golden harvests that they looked as if they were bursting, he would not give anything away.

"One day as he sat in his big house counting his gold pieces, and looking through the open door at his bursting barns, his servant heard the miser exclaim, 'What shall I do? I have no room where to bestow my fruits. This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, thou hast much



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Eugène Burnand

"HE SAT IN HIS BIG HOUSE, COUNTING HIS GOLD PIECES"

goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry.'

"Then suddenly a dark cloud hid the sun, the servant said, and as if in an echo he heard these words, 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?'

"And that night the miser died. His goods were scattered to any one who claimed them and one of his slaves tried to run away with his chest of jewels. But fearing that he was watched he hid it in the field and fled to his own country.

"There it was that the poor man in his great need found the treasure, and knowing that it did not belong to any one, he thought that if only he owned the field the jewels would rightfully be his. He buried it again and hurried home with his good news. His pale-faced children crowded around him, drinking in every word as if they were listening to a fairy tale, and his wife with her feeble baby in her arms shed tears of joy.

"'But how can we buy the field?' she

asked, and then very carefully they counted over the things they could sell to raise enough money to buy the spot where the treasure lay. There was the donkey which had been to the family like a faithful friend, and her little colt with which the children played as with another child. There were the silver bracelets which the mother always wore, presents from her father in a far-away land, and the coral ear-rings which had been her husband's wedding gift to her.

"It was very hard for them to part with these cherished belongings, but they longed so deeply for the hidden treasure, and their joy in thinking of it was so great, that they were willing to give up everything they owned to possess it.

"So the field was bought and the chest dug up again, although what was done with it no one in the village knew, for with heavy pouches the family travelled away over the mountains to a new country. But never again surely could any one of them be in want, for the treasure was more than enough for all to carry out their wildest dreams, and that,

their neighbours believed, would be not only to bring comfort to themselves, but to help many who were cold or hungry, friendless or unhappy.

"And such a treasure," said the shepherd, "is like the kingdom of heaven. For no dreams of happiness or of fame can ever be as wonderful as the dreams we can each of us make real to-day, for ourselves and for others, if we feel the glory of that kingdom around us."

XX

THE GREAT FEAST

AMONG the fishermen who lived around the lake of which we have talked so often, some were comfortably off and some were quite poor. Many of them had boats of their own, but others earned a scant livelihood by hiring themselves out to their more prosperous friends. One of these poorer men was spreading out nets to dry in the sun one morning, and while he worked he told the children who had been playing around him this story.

"I had walked for days in search of the Master," he said, "and when I reached the city where He was, I found that He was dining with a rich and powerful man, a Pharisee.

"For a long time I stood in the courtyard of the house where the feast was being held, hoping that as the Lord passed out I might have a glimpse of His face, and hear perhaps a little of His wonderful teaching. Many

others had the same hope, and the court was filled with women and children as well as men, most of them even more ragged and poorer looking than I am, while some were ill or blind, or crippled; and I guessed from the anxious look upon their faces that they feared that the Master, whom they had travelled far to see, might be too absorbed in talking with the learned men within the house to speak to them.

"A large company of these important invited guests surrounded Jesus in the banquet hall, and from their voices and the few words we caught, we judged they were questioning the Lord sharply about a work of healing He had performed that day, a Sabbath when none of them thought it proper to do any work. His answer silenced them, and then we noticed a pushing and jostling among the guests as if they were all trying to take the best seats, the couches in the centre of the room.

"Among those of us waiting in the courtyard there was a poor man carrying a sick child. He had drawn very near the wide

open archway of the house, as if wondering whether he dared advance among all those proud guests and bring his suffering boy to Jesus. But when he saw how scornfully those who had taken the chief seats looked at their own friends at the lower end of the room, he drew back discouraged, and the child wailed feebly in his arms.

"Then above the clatter of the serving men we heard the voice of the Master. He was telling the company a story, and soon the room was so quiet that we, outside, could hear every word.

"'A certain man made a great supper and bade many,' began Jesus, 'and he sent his servant at supper time to say unto them that were bidden, "Come, for all things are now ready." And then all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, "I have bought a piece of ground and I must needs go and see it; I pray thee have me excused."

"'And another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused."

"'And another said, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come."

"'So that servant came and told his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city and bring hither the poor and the maimed, and the halt and the blind."

"'And the servant said, "Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded and yet there is room."

"'And the lord said unto the servant, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper."'

"When the voice of Jesus ceased there was stillness in the room for a moment, and then angry murmurs arose among the guests. They knew the Master was speaking of them. He had told them many times of the life of service and brotherly love in which they could follow Him, and instead they quarrelled over chief seats at feasts, took

Him to task for healing a suffering man on the Sabbath, and chose to spend their time amusing themselves instead of helping the many poor and needy at their very gates. They were furious with Him, but they did not yet dare show that glorious figure, who stood so fearlessly among them, how much they hated and dreaded this teaching.

"And then—oh, I shall never forget that sight!

"The Master stepped out into the court-yard, and the multitude of patient, longing people waiting there crowded around Him as if they were starving for His presence. He healed the sick, comforted sorrows and fears, smiled at the children, and by His gracious teaching brought peace and happiness to them all; until as the sunset and the purple twilight filled the court, that throng of poor and ragged people looked more shining and blissful than the whole company of brilliant guests who still ate and drank within the house.

"Out into the streets the great crowd followed the Master, and then, although I

longed to linger near that wonderful One who was still stirring the hearts of the multitude with His thrilling words, I knew that I should not be serving Him truly if I neglected my work and kept the fishermen waiting for me that night. So I hurried off down the dark streets and across the starlit moors to the sea. But my heart beat high with happiness, and I felt as if I had been one of the guests brought from the highway and the hedges to a great feast, the memory of which will fill all the rest of my life with joy and splendour."

XXI

THE TEN SORROWFUL ONES

NOT far from the lake of Galilee was a certain village, through which Ruth's father often journeyed to sell his fish. It was a dreary place, for a group of sick and sorrowful men met each traveller, begging food or money and showing the terrible scars of their disease, for they were lepers. Their fingers and toes and eyelids were worn away, the blood in their veins flowed like a muddy stream, and they were horrible to look upon. They lived together in a miserable camp outside the village, dressed in rags, and ate the scraps of food which were thrown to them.

"Unclean, unclean," they would cry in a wailing tone as they saw a traveller riding towards them, but although gifts were often thrown to them, no man dared draw near enough to touch even the rags of the stricken men. It was a law made by the priests of

that country that every leper must cry "unclean" to warn others of his approach.

One morning when Ruth's father rode towards the village, his donkey's bags loaded with shining fish, he saw a man walking slowly across the fields towards the lepers. The fisherman pulled up his animal and watched in astonishment. Then he saw that one of the man's hands was bound and he knew the frightful disease must have come to him also. He looked differently from the others, perhaps because he had not been ill so long, and suddenly the fisherman's eyes filled with tears. For this new leper had turned his sorrowful face towards the entrance to the village, to look at a group of little children standing there clinging to a woman's skirts. The children were sobbing and the woman's face was hidden in her hands.

"They must be the man's family," thought the fisherman, and he looked again at the father who, stricken with leprosy, had just said good-bye forever to all whom he loved. But in spite of his terrible sorrow the leper

smiled at the weeping group as if to encourage them and waved his hand. Then, turning away to hide his look of anguish, he walked on to the leper's camp.

The fisherman could not hear the words which the sick men called to the newcomer, but he understood from their faces and the sharp tone of their voices that they were not welcoming the stranger kindly. Many times when Ruth's father had thrown them fish or crusts of bread they had quarrelled over them like angry dogs and "probably now," he thought, "they are saying there is not enough for another man."

That evening the fisherman journeyed back with empty baskets upon the same road he had travelled in the morning. Again the cry of "unclean, unclean" rang upon his ears, and across the darkening fields he saw the lepers drawing as near as they dared. Taking some of the coppers for which he had sold his fish he threw them in the direction of the desolate wail. Immediately nine lepers pounced upon the money, each muttering and striking at the others in

his eagerness to take all for himself. But against a streak of red light in the sky the fisherman saw another figure, a dark, sorrowful man with a bound hand, who gazed yearningly towards the village, and who looked as if all the light and hope had gone out of his life.

Weeks passed before Ruth's father journeyed again through that village, and when he did so he found the road blocked with a crowd of people.

"What do you all seek here in this lonely spot?" he asked, and one after another the crowd answered: "Do you not know, have you not heard? Jesus of Nazareth is travelling upon this very road."

Quickly the fisherman dismounted, and after tying his donkey to a tree, he joined the crowd in watching for the coming of the Lord. Presently there was a cloud of dust, and a band of soldiers swept past.

"Is that His guard?" questioned several. "Do they clear the way for His coming?"

But others who had seen Jesus answered, "Ah no, He needs no soldiers to guard Him

or to prepare His way. He is as humble as one of us, and yet He is the Son of God."

Then up the sunny road walked a little group of men. They were mostly fishermen, in striped cloaks and bright turbans, although one or two among them were dressed in the soft rich garments worn by men of high positions. In their midst walked one in a white robe. A square of plain white linen was bound upon His head with a crimson band, and His feet were shod with leather sandals.

He was not robed like a prince, but as soon as the crowd saw Him they knew that no earthly king was half so glorious, and a great wave of love and devotion swept over them. Men and women leaned forward for a closer look at that wonderful face, children pressed nearer to touch His robes and smile up at Him, and then through the wonder and peace of that moment rang the terrible cry of the approaching lepers: "Unclean, unclean. Jesus, Master, have mercy upon us."

The crowd fell back in horror, but Jesus, His face full of compassion, gazed upon the

miserable sufferers and said, "Go, and show yourselves to the priests!"

As it was the priests who forbade the lepers to draw near well people so it must also be the priests who, if the lepers were cured, should allow them to return to their homes, and these ten men who heard the words of Jesus were healed. They felt the fresh blood rushing through their veins, the cloths fell from their wounded hands and their skin was as whole and clean as a child's. And then dropping their crutches nine of them ran leaping and jumping into the village, with no words of thanks to the Christ who had given them back their lives.

But the tenth man, the newcomer whom the fisherman had watched join the others, turned swiftly, colour in his cheeks and light in his eyes, and glorifying God he fell upon his face at Jesus' feet, thanking Him with all his heart.

"Were not ten cleansed?" asked the Master; "but where are the nine? Were there none found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger?"

Then He raised the thankful man with one hand while He placed the other tenderly upon his shoulder.

"Arise!" He said, "and go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole."

There was a stir among the crowd, and the people wedged back to make a path for a woman with flying hair and shining eyes. She was the same woman, the fisherman remembered, who had stood weeping at the village gate, her face hidden in her hands.

She clung wildly to her husband and gazed at him as though she could never look enough. Around them pressed their little children,—and then the fisherman saw them no more. For down the road towards the setting sun and the blue sea walked the Master, and Ruth's father hurried home to tell his family and neighbours to make ready; the Christ was only a few miles away from them, and all who could travel the next day would surely find Him.

"ARISE AND GO THY WAY" *Wm. Hole*

XXII

THE QUEST OF THE CHILDREN

"THE Master has come to Galilee! He is only half a day's journey away. We shall see the Lord to-morrow!" cried the children in the fishing village, when Ruth's father came home saying that he had seen Jesus. Through the streets they ran carrying the news to every house and telling all to prepare for an early start on the morrow. "We are going also!" they exclaimed. "The children are to meet upon the beach at sunrise. Perhaps the Master will tell us a story or, who knows, we may see Him heal a sick baby!"

There was very little sleep that night in the village. The children were wild with excitement, the fathers were busy getting their boats and nets ready to leave, and the mothers were filled with anxiety. Only two or three of them had seen Jesus, and although they longed greatly to hear Him, and to

bring their children to Him, they were very shy about it. "Dressed in our simple homespun clothes how dare we approach a man greater than a prince?" they questioned, and when they saw the children so overjoyed, they were much troubled.

"The Lord may not even look at our babies with their bare feet and poor garments," they said, "and the children's hopes are so high they will be bitterly disappointed."

But the children had no fears, and when the first ray of light shone in the east, they met upon the beach. The waves were murmuring softly as if asleep, above their heads throbbed the morning star, and the children's voices floated out over the waves as they sang:

"Wake little baby, the darkness has fled,
Over stars, moon and heavens a glory is shed.
In the hush of its coming a new Star is born,
The Star of our gladness, the Star of Christ's morn.
Wake little baby, look up where on high
The stars are all singing a new lullaby."

As they ceased, the sun rose in its splendour and the whole world awoke. A light

wind came blowing gaily across the sea, the waves, blue now and crested with foam, broke and sparkled, the beach shone like powdered silver and over it chased the merry children.

Ruth was among them, and as they passed through towns and villages on their way they gathered the boys and girls together shouting, "We are going to see the Master who healed Ruth, the cripple," and the children caught the excitement and joined them.

Behind them came the fathers and mothers carrying the babies, and soon the children's arms were filled also. "Let us carry the Master a present," one child had exclaimed, and as they journeyed along the road they scampered back and forth from fields and hedges picking great bunches of anemones, pink mallows and gorgeous golden lilies.

The path led in one place across a pasture where a boy was helping a shepherd tend the flocks. The lad joined the children, and beneath his small shepherd's cloak he carried a tiny baby lamb, his present to Jesus.

Upon the grass by the roadside the throng

stopped for their lunch of barley bread and cool water from a near-by stream. The boys and girls were merrier than ever. They sprinkled crumbs for the birds and many gray doves flew down, tame enough to eat from the hands of the children who looked, in their brightly-coloured garments, like a field full of flowers.

But the mothers, watching them, talked anxiously among themselves. "I am always thinking, 'Suppose the crops fail, what will the children eat?'" said one woman. While another added, "Every day when the men go out in the boats I think, 'If the fishing is poor how shall we get money to buy wool, and what will the children wear?'"

Each mother agreed that was her thought also, and by the time they had finished eating and talking, the children were far down the road, their garments and the flowers they carried making a brilliant spot of colour in the sunshine.

And so Jesus saw them. He was standing upon a hillside a short distance away, surrounded by priests and Pharisees in their

flowing robes, while among them gleamed the armour of soldiers, the gorgeous robes of rich men, and the grave faces of scholars from Jerusalem. They were all listening with deep attention to the words of the Master, and when the throng of happy children reached the outskirts of the crowd, the disciples of Jesus motioned them back scornfully, and told the mothers to take the children away that they might not trouble the Master.

For one terrible moment the children's hearts sank and their bright faces clouded. Then a voice rang out which thrilled them all.

"Suffer the little children to come unto Me and forbid them not," said Jesus, "for of such is the kingdom of God."

The crowd parted making a pathway to a white robed man, with a face so beautiful that the children ran to Him with eager cries and outstretched arms. The throng of men looked on in astonishment. They had travelled far to listen to the Christ and He had stopped in the midst of a serious discussion to talk to little children. The Master saw

their look of displeased bewilderment and answered their thoughts.

"Verily I say unto you," He said, "whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter therein."

Then He took child after child up in His arms and blessed them, and they clustered around Him and clung to Him, gazing at Him with adoration. At His feet they had laid the flowers and He smiled His thanks for their gifts, and then turned to the mothers for whom also the crowd had made room. Perhaps He noticed the worried lines on their faces, or possibly He had overheard their words as they talked together in the distance. For He glanced at the gift of glowing lilies, and at the birds which still hovered above the heads of the children, and then looking straight at the mothers He spoke words which sank into every heart.

"Take no thought for your life," He said, "what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat and the body

more than raiment? Behold the birds of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

"And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field which to-day is, and to-morrow is thrown into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

"Therefore take no thought saying 'what shall we eat?' or 'what shall we drink?' or 'wherewith shall we be clothed?' For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

"The kingdom of God," repeated one of the soldiers in the crowd. "The Master tells us to seek for it, but He spoke as if the children had already entered there. Can it be

possible that one of these little boys is nearer the presence of God than a mighty man?"

Then he glanced at the children, and his question was answered. As they surrounded Jesus, gazing up at Him with love and worship in their eyes, their faces reflected the glory which shone from the Master Himself. "It is as though they were beholding the face of our Father who is in heaven," the soldier said solemnly, and all who heard him bowed their heads in assent.

XXIII

THE RICH YOUNG RULER

AMONG the crowd who watched Jesus as He blessed the children, there stood a rich young ruler. His tunic of golden satin and outer robe of brilliant scarlet shone out beside the darker robes of the scholars beside him. Around his neck hung a heavy golden chain and upon his left hand he wore a signet ring of great value. He heard Jesus preach and then he saw this wonderful teacher, who drew great crowds and held them breathless, turn and put His arms lovingly around the children. "It is possible," thought the young ruler excitedly, "that this marvellous man may be able to answer the mysterious question which troubles me day and night. I long to live forever in heaven but what can I do to be sure of having that endless life?"

So when the sun sank towards the western

mountains and the blissful children streamed down the road towards the sea, the ruler rushed after Jesus as He made His way through the crowd. Throwing himself eagerly in the path before the Lord, he cried, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may have everlasting life?"

"Thou knowest the commandments," said Jesus. "Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and mother."

"All these have I kept from my youth up," answered the young man, and Jesus looking at him, loved him. He was so full of energy and earnestness, he had tried so hard to lead a blameless life, and yet he had just missed great peace and happiness. And the Master said to him, "One thing thou lackest. Go thy way, sell all that thou hast and give it to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross and follow Me."

The young ruler loved his jewels and splendid robes; he enjoyed the great house he lived in and the delicate food he ate.

G. F. Watts

"THE RICH YOUNG RULER TURNED AWAY SORROWFULLY"

He felt that he could not give them all up, even to follow Jesus. So he turned away sorrowfully. He went back to his fine home, and putting on his most gorgeous robes he invited his friends to a feast. But the food seemed tasteless, the songs of his musicians had no charm, and his golden chain hung heavily around his neck. All through the evening the ruler could think of nothing but the look in Jesus' eyes when He told him to come and follow Him. He dreamed of it that night and for many nights afterwards. Soon he ceased to enjoy his jewels and his gold, and the beautiful house seemed dull and lonely. And so one day he sold them all, and dressed in simple garments started forth to find the Master.

Over the country he travelled, reaching one little village just after Jesus had left, and hearing at another that the Lord had passed through on His way to the great city of Jerusalem. So it was a long time before the young man found the Master. At some places he stayed for several days, for all the money he had received from selling his home

and jewels was in a bag at his side, and into every town he came he sought out those who were poor and wretched and gave them pieces of his gold. At last it was all gone, not one coin left, and the young man's heart grew heavy, not because he had lost his riches, but because he had nothing left for those who needed it.

But that very day the joy of the young ruler's life came to him. He found Jesus. We do not know how or where, whether the Master was preaching to a crowd in the city of Jerusalem, whether He was in some home healing a sick child, or walking upon the seashore with the fishermen. Only we are sure that when the ruler gave away all that he had for Jesus' sake, that day he found the Master and became His follower forever.

XXIV

A SUNRISE AND A SUNSET

ONE morning as the sun rose over the mountains a lad stood upon a hill-top, watching the sky turn from gray to rose, and then to flaming gold. In the distance flashed the silver line of a river, changing, as the boy gazed at it, first to gold and then to shining blue. At his feet among the green grass of the hillside bright flowers swayed and nodded, and above his head, mounting higher and higher, soared a sky-lark, singing its song of welcome to the dawn.

"It is all so beautiful!" exclaimed Philip (for that was the boy's name). "I don't believe anything in the world can be more glorious." But before the sun had set and risen twice again the lad had looked upon something more wonderful than the sunrise, and had listened to a sound more thrilling than the song of a lark.

As he came running down the hillside to the town of Nain where his home was, his mother stood at the door of her house watching for him. He was her only child, her husband was dead, and all her hopes and her happiness were wrapped up in Philip. She made beautiful embroideries which she sold to the rich men of the town for a few pence, and as they walked haughtily down the streets dressed in the robes upon which she had spent long days of toil, she would smile and say to herself, "They feel very rich and proud with their fine clothes and shining rings, but not one of them is as rich as I am with my dear little lad."

Into her arms he rushed as he came running down the hilltop, and then the work of the day began. There was flat bread to be baked on the glowing coals for their breakfast and afterwards, while the mother sewed, Philip brushed up the home, scrubbed the red tile floor, and fed the donkey behind the house. He was a very useful member of the family, this gray donkey. With great jars upon his back Philip led him daily from

house to house, delivering water from the fountain in the centre of the town, and carrying eggs and vegetables from the farms outside the city gate to the big houses in Nain. After the jars were empty he would fill them with gay flowers from the hillside which he sold, as he led the gray animal through the twilight, to the rich ladies of the town.

But the evening after Philip had watched the glorious sunrise from the hilltop, the ladies watched and waited for their fragrant nosegays in vain; there was no fresh water for the stone jars in front of the great houses, and the baskets of fruit and vegetables remained at the farms beneath the cool green leaves, where they had been placed in readiness for the lad with his donkey.

For Philip was very, very ill. He tossed to and fro, burning with fever, until as the sun sank in the west the life of the boy seemed to go with it, and Philip lay as still and white as if he were carved out of stone. His mother knelt beside the bedside, heart-broken. Her sorrow was so great that she could not weep, she just knelt all night long on the cold tile

floor, her arms outstretched across the bed in an agony of grief.

In the morning the neighbours came and tried to comfort her, but when they looked at the quiet little figure of the lad who had been the sunshine of that home, tears ran down their cheeks and their words of sympathy were broken with sobs.

And so it happened that two days after the morning when Philip, filled with the joy of life, had stood upon the hilltop watching the splendid sunrise, his lifeless body was placed upon a stretcher and was carried out of the city gate, down the steep path towards the rocky caves which were used for burial places. Beside him, wrapped in a dark cloak, walked his mother, her eyes dim now with tears. Her face was so piteous, and her feet so faltering, that at sight of her the neighbours who walked with her broke into loud sobs and wailings. "We mourn for this child," they cried, "the only son of his mother and she is a widow!" And the crowd of mourners tore their garments and wailed until the valley below was filled with echoes of their grief.

But up the hillside came another procession. Early that morning Jesus had left the lake of Galilee, and walked for some miles along the shore of the silver river Philip had seen flashing in the sun's rays. Then the Master had turned towards the mountains, until as the sun began to sink behind them, He with His followers reached the hillside on which the city of Nain was built. At that moment the funeral procession was passing through the open gateway.

Without heeding the cries and sobs of the neighbours, Jesus' eyes rested at once upon the mother, so quiet in her terrible sorrow, so colourless in her black shabby robe, that no other in the company with the Master had noticed her. But the heart of Jesus was filled with compassion. "Weep not," He said in His tender, stirring voice, and she raised her tear-dimmed eyes and looked questioningly into His glorious face. Those who carried the stretcher placed it upon the ground to let the Master pass, but instead He bent over it, and touching the cold figure wrapped in white cloths He said in ringing

tones, "Young man, I say unto thee arise."

Over the crowd there came a hush of breathless waiting. That voice, which stirred every heart with strange hopes and longings, could it, they thought, call back the spark of life to that tired body?

Then some of the mourners fell back terrified, others raised a cry of gladness and many fell worshipping at the feet of Jesus.

For the lad had sat up, the light of life in his face, and the mother, her eyes dim no longer but sparkling with joy, had rushed forward to gather him in her arms. But Philip was gazing deeply into the glowing eyes of the Master, and at last he spoke as if in answer to the words with which Jesus had just called him.

"My Lord and my God," he said. Then Jesus put His arm around the boy, helped him to stand, and very tenderly led him to the waiting mother.

The crowd saw the widow clasp her living, breathing child in her arms and gaze rapturously, first at him and then at the beautiful

face of the Master who was speaking to her. What He said the watching, awe-stricken people could not hear, but they saw the widow and her child turn, as if satisfied beyond all measure, and climb up the steep path, through the archway of the city, to their home. The procession had walked down beneath gray skies, crushed with sorrow, but now, following the happy mother and her lad, they climbed back under the splendid sunset clouds, their hearts overflowing with joy and wonder.

XXV

AT THE ROADSIDE

"TELL me one of the stories the wind sings to you," said Nathaniel. He was seated on the bank of a stream, around him the sheep were scattered, and beside him sat an older boy whose eyes were closed, for he was blind. Bartimeus, that was the blind lad's name, was the son of Timæus, the shepherd employed by Nathaniel's father to help care for his great flock, and like Timæus the lad was dressed in a shepherd's short tunic and striped cloak.

The boy had been blind since he was born. When he sat in the tiny hut which was his home, his face was drawn and sad and his voice sounded dull and hopeless, but out on the green fields among the sheep he was like a different lad. He would sit contentedly for hours beside a stream, listening to its ripple and murmur, and he spent whole

days upon the wooded hillside with the wind blowing in his face, and such a happy smile upon his lips that no one, who did not see his closed eyes, would guess that he was blind. He loved to listen to the wind in the tree tops and through the long grass, the rustle and flutter of falling leaves, and the swaying of the boughs. He would tell Nathaniel the songs the wind had sung him, the secrets the brook had told, and the stories of the rustling trees. In return for these tales, the younger boy looked up at the blue sky with white drifting clouds, or a flock of birds flying across it, and described what he saw to the blind lad. Then while Bartimeus lay at night upon the mat on the floor of the shepherd's hut, the pictures Nathaniel had described to him floated through his mind, until instead of the blackness he seemed to see glowing skies, and flying birds, and splendid clouds.

There was another time when these bright pictures filled his mind, and made him forget his surroundings. As he could not work, and his family was very poor, he was forced

to beg. Several days each week his father led him to the roadside, and there Bartimeus sat with a wooden bowl outstretched for gifts. He was so used to it that he did not mind sitting there any more than being shut up in the hut. Both places were far from the sheep fields which he loved and after all, in spite of the begging, he liked the roadside better than the house. The wind blew there occasionally, although it brought no fragrance of flowers, and sometimes a bird perched upon the wall behind him and sang a song as if to cheer him. When it was finished he would think of the bird's flight as Nathaniel had described it, and he forgot the noise of jostling passers-by in imagining the upward sweep which the bird made when it fluttered its tiny wings.

But one twilight as the evening star began to shine softly through the silvery sky, Nathaniel sang Bartimeus the song of the new Star, the shepherd's lullaby. After that the blind lad's dreams were no longer of clouds, or birds, or sunset skies. He persuaded Nathaniel to tell him every word he knew about

the Christ, the marvellous man whose grandfather had been a shepherd boy upon those very fields. Then as the blind lad lay upon his mat at night, or sat alone and helpless upon the roadside, his mind was filled with glowing pictures of a gracious figure who loved children, called fishermen to be His followers, brought comfort to the saddest heart, and healed those who were sick.

"Is it possible that this wonderful Master could make a blind man see?" cried Bartimeus one day when Nathaniel had finished telling of how Jesus healed Ruth. Nathaniel did not know, but he was almost as excited as the blind boy himself, and for days afterwards they talked of what Bartimeus would do if he had his sight.

"I think I would be a shepherd and live out on the fields," he said at first; "then I could see the sun rise and set, the birds fly across the sky, and the waving of the trees when the wind sings to them."

But the next time he saw Nathaniel, the blind lad had spent a day upon the roadside and had changed his mind. "I would travel

everywhere," he said, "and you would go with me. We would see all kinds of men, rich and poor, soldiers and shepherds, priests and fishermen, and when we had found the finest, strongest man in the world, we would follow him."

"But first you must have your sight," said Nathaniel, "and even if the Master comes to this part of the country we do not know that He can cure you."

But Bartimeus was full of hope. That evening, as Nathaniel led him home across the fields, the wind seemed to whisper that help was coming, the stream they crossed murmured comfort, and although the blind lad could not see them, the stars above his head shone brightly and Nathaniel sang,

"In the hush of its coming a new Star is born,
The Star of our gladness, the Star of Christ's morn."

"'Christ's morn,'" repeated Bartimeus; "it has dawned already in my heart and soon it may dawn before these dark eyes."

The next day Bartimeus was again led to the roadside to beg, and as the sun sank Na-

thaniel, instead of the shepherd father, came to bring the boy home. He took the bowl with its few tiny coins from the hands of the patient lad who sat there so forlornly, and was about to hand him his stick when an outcry arose down the street.

"He is coming," voices called; "let us hurry to meet Him!" and down the street poured a crowd of men, women and children.

"Who is it?" cried Bartimeus. "Tell me, I pray you, who is coming!" And some one called back, "It is Jesus of Nazareth."

Then above the tramping of many feet, and the pushing and exclamations of the crowd, rose the voice of the blind lad.

"Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy upon me!" cried the pleading voice, and many around him bade him harshly to be quiet, not to disturb the Master. But again and again he cried, all the longing of his soul poured into those words, "Thou Son of David, have mercy upon me!"

"Can the Lord pass unheeding of that cry?" thought Nathaniel, for already the majestic, white robed figure was opposite

them. Then tears of relief and joy stood in the boy's eyes, for Jesus stood still in the centre of the throng and said in a low voice to the men near Him, "Call ye him."

Bartimeus had not heard those words, and a look of heart-broken disappointment was sweeping across his face when the men who had been sent reached him. "Be of good cheer," they exclaimed; "rise, He calleth thee." Throwing aside his cloak, Bartimeus sprang up and hurried, led by Nathaniel, down the path the people made to Jesus.

Many beautiful sounds had brought delight to the sensitive ears of Bartimeus, the whisper of the wind, the songs of the birds, and the ripple of the silvery stream, but at that moment he heard a voice which was more thrilling than any music of which he had even dreamed.

"What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" said the Christ, and the blind lad answered, "Master, that I should receive my sight." Then Jesus said, "Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole."

With eyes suddenly opened Bartimeus

looked up, and saw the twilight sky with one clear star shining there; around him he saw a sea of astonished faces, and before him he saw one who he knew in a flash was the Son of God.

There was no need for him to travel the world over in search of the perfect man; He was there before the newly awakened eyes of the blind beggar. And Bartimeus thanked the Master for the great gift of his sight, not by words alone, but by following Him and serving Him forevermore.

XXVI

HOW THE KING CAME TO JERUSALEM

"MORE than thirty years ago we, like these children, watched and waited for the King's coming," said the shepherd, Nathaniel's father, to his sister Ruth. She had brought little Ruth to Bethlehem for a visit in the lovely spring weather, and soon after their arrival they had heard that Jesus was journeying to Jerusalem. A great feast was being held in the city, and there was much excited questioning about whether the Master would be present. The priests and Pharisees now feared and hated Him, because He laid bare their sins and because the common people loved Him, and they longed to take Him prisoner and kill Him.

"Will He dare come?" asked some of the visitors to the feast. "Surely He will not venture into the city," answered others, and still others who knew Jesus exclaimed, "He

fears nothing; if there is need of Him He will be here." And in that temple, filled with dishonest money-lenders, crafty priests, noisy merchants, and Pharisees with smug smiles and hearts full of cruel thoughts, there was great need of the fearless, gracious Master.

Then a rumour arose that He was travelling along the road which passes through Bethany to Jerusalem. The news spread to Bethlehem, and from that town many flocked to meet Him. Little Ruth was there, her golden hair flying in the wind as her strong, fleet feet carried her back and forth, from the crowd of children to the grown people walking behind. And Nathaniel's tall slim figure was generally by her side. His hair and eyes were very dark, and in the depths of his brown eyes there was a light of great happiness. He knew that when he saw the Master again he would see also his friend Bartimeus, the lad whose sight had been given to him only a few days before.

But among the crowd there were many children who had never seen Jesus, and they were watching, as the shepherd's children had

watched over thirty years before, for the coming of a great king.

"Will he wear a sparkling crown and ride in a golden chariot?" one little girl asked, and a boy answered, "I think he will be a soldier king with shining armour and waving banners."

Just then a soldier rode around the curve in the road and with a cry of "There he is!" the boy ran to greet him, followed by many of the children. The rider's armour, and golden belt which held his sword, glittered in the sunshine, his crimson mantle streamed behind him, and his horse was a splendid prancing steed. But his mouth was hard and his eyes cruel, and the boy sprang back disappointed. "This cannot be the King whom all men love!" he cried, as the soldier drove spurs into his animal and galloped past without a glance at the watching crowd.

Again the children ran to the turn in the road and again the cry rang out, "Here he comes!" Up the hillside in a fine chariot drove a man dressed in gorgeous robes. Some distance behind him rode two attend-

ants, their horses laden with great bales of goods, for their master was a powerful merchant. A pouch of gold hung from his girdle, and as the excited children pressed around his chariot wheels he scowled at them, and drew his money-bag closely to him as if afraid they might steal it.

The children fell back dismayed and little Ruth tried to comfort them. "The Christ is not at all like that," she explained. "Long ago, my mother says, the children in Bethlehem watched every morning and evening for the King, and when He came, instead of wearing splendid robes and driving in a chariot as they had imagined, He was a tiny baby lying in the manger of a stable. He is a man now, but He is as different from those men as the wee baby was from the great, proud king the children looked for years ago."

Then all the crowd drew back silently, for around the turn in the road came a procession which filled them with wonder and awe. There were fishermen whom many of the waiting people knew as old friends; among

them walked a young ruler whom they had seen upon great occasions in Jerusalem, and there was Bartimeus, blind no longer, his eyes fixed on the central figure in the procession at whom, in an instant, every one in the expectant crowd was gazing. Riding, not upon a charger but upon a humble ass, was the wonderful figure of Jesus. And when He drew near the groups from Bethlehem and the neighbouring towns, they could contain their joy no longer. The children cried "Hosanna!" and surrounded Him, the men threw their cloaks before His animal's feet, while again and again their cries rang out, "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; hosanna in the highest."

Around the curve of the Mount of Olives the procession swept, and before them, shining white and gold through the morning mist, like a fairy city of one's dreams, shone Jerusalem. On the green slopes around it many pilgrims to the feast had camped in tents of branches, and when they heard the glad shouts and caught sight of the approach-

ing company they also poured down the road to meet the Master. Tearing boughs from the graceful palm trees which lined the road, they threw them beneath His ass' feet or waved them like great banners before Him, while those who led the procession and those who followed cried, "Hosanna, blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord, peace in heaven and glory in the highest."

Into Jerusalem they swept, the sweet voices of the children mingling with the salutes of the men, and the grateful song of the women. The whole city was moved with excitement. "What does this mean?" questioned many leaning from the windows and the roofs; passers-by stopped on their hurried way to gaze, and bewildered merchants turned from their trade to see what commotion was carrying away all their customers.

"Who is this?" they cried and the happy throng shouted back in answer, "This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee."

Up to the great temple they streamed, and then, as Jesus entered through the golden

gates, many had to leave Him and return to their homes. But among those who were camping in leafy booths around the city and so could remain was the band from Bethlehem,—Bartimeus and Nathaniel, Ruth and her mother, the shepherd and his friends.

A short time after Jesus had entered the temple they followed Him there, silently, and filled with wondering joy. Many of them had seen Him before, this glorious King, when He lay as a tiny baby in a manger within a stable; and to each one of them, big and little, He seemed very near, for had He not been born within the walls of their own town of Bethlehem?

XXVII

IN THE TEMPLE COURT

AS the glad procession swept into Jerusalem a lame boy, about the age of Nathaniel, hobbled after them. He had heard the sound of singing and the tramp of many feet, as he sat in the hut where he and his mother lived alone.

"Come, mother, let us hurry and see what is happening!" he had cried, but the mother was sewing upon a long robe which had to be finished before dark and she shook her head. "If this is not done, you will have no supper," she answered. "I have no money nor food left."

So the boy, whose name was Benjamin, hobbled off by himself, hurrying along the narrow street until he reached the broad road by which the throng had entered the city. But he was just too late; the procession had already passed, and all he saw were the gay colours of the men and women's garments,

the palms waving above their heads, and some children following in the rear. He could not catch even a glimpse of the Master in the midst of them, but he heard the cry of the excited, bewildered people of the city, "Who is this?" and the answering shout, "Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth."

Benjamin had listened to stories about this marvellous prophet, and if only he could have hobbled a little faster he might have seen Him! Tears rose to his eyes, but he winked them back before they rolled down his thin face, and thump, thump, went his crutches as he hurried on down the broad road, hoping the procession might stop somewhere and give him a chance to catch up. But they swept on right up to the temple gate. Many scattered there and Benjamin in the distance saw a tall, white robed figure, who entered into the outer court, and the gates swung shut behind Him.

So the lad was left outside, tired and disappointed. He was not strong, and the long walk had been almost too much for him. With a stifled sob he sank upon the ground,

rested his head against the temple wall, and closed his eyes. He had been in the great building sometimes with his mother, but even if the gates should open again he would not dare go in alone. "What a hubbub there is there," he thought drearily. He could hear the harsh cries of the men who, within the very courts of the temple, were selling oxen and sheep and doves. He heard the lowing of the cattle, the bleating of frightened lambs, and the clink of money as the animals were bought by the visitors to the feast. There were many other noises also, for the court was full of men who sat at little tables exchanging the country people's money for different coins which could be used in buying the animals. They charged so much for doing it that the visitors saw they were being robbed and screamed angrily at the money-changers, who shouted back scornfully in return.

If it had not been for Benjamin's longing to see Jesus he would have crept away from the clamour which made his head ache, but suddenly above the noise of animals and

angry men another voice rang out like the clear note of a trumpet. Every syllable reached Benjamin as distinctly as if he had been within the court.

"It is written, 'My house shall be called the house of prayer,' but ye have made it a den of thieves," were the words.

Then Benjamin heard a crash as the tables of the money-changers were overthrown, and the gates flew open while animals poured forth, driven by men who showed by their haste how great was their fear. Down the road they all hurried, droves of cattle and flocks of sheep, men bearing cages of doves, and others carrying bags of clinking coins.

Then a great silence fell upon the temple, and through the wide open gates slipped little Benjamin. Around him in the court were great arches opening into other parts of the building, and through one of them he saw again the white robed figure. Across the marble floor he hobbled, his crutch making such a clatter that he looked around fearfully to see if any one would stop him. Groups of priests in splendid robes, Pharisees, and

Scribes, and leading men, stood around in groups, talking excitedly together. But they paid no attention to Benjamin and he hurried past them, until, once within the arch, he leaned back against the coloured stones of which it was built and looked eagerly for the figure he had seen.

Into this place others had also hastened. As soon as the Master quieted the tumult in the outer court, those who had come into the temple because they were sick, or sad, or longed to pray, poured out of the various rooms in the great building to find Jesus. They could all walk faster than Benjamin, although some of them also were lame, and once more the lad found himself just too late to reach the already surrounded Master. But he heard again the clear, sweet voice of Jesus as He spoke to one sufferer after another, and then he was filled with wonder. For he saw those who had been lame, or blind, or ill, turn away and pass through the arched doorway with seeing eyes, and strong, well bodies. As they left others poured in, and there seemed no chance for Benjamin to ever hobble near

enough for even a glimpse of the Master's face. But he heard the words of Jesus when, the throng cured, He stood in their midst and taught them. Such wonderful things He said, about what prayer was, asking God for help just as a child asks his father for bread; and forgetting his weariness and shyness, forgetting everything but that beautiful appealing voice, Benjamin crept through the crowd, nearer and nearer to the Christ in their midst.

With wide open eyes shining out of a pale, wan face, he at last gazed upon Jesus. And he felt, as did every child who saw the Master, a love and joy so deep that nothing else in the world seemed to matter; and as he listened enchanted to the gracious words and gazed upon that glorious figure, he crept still farther forward until he could place his hand upon the white robe of the Master. Still speaking to the eager throng Jesus put His arm around the frail body and drew the boy closely to Him. And Benjamin, filled with thrilling happiness, felt no surprise; it seemed as if he belonged there.

When the splendour of the sunset spread across the sky above the open court the Master ceased His teaching, and made His way through the crowd, which parted to let Him pass, to the great golden gates. Beside Him walked Benjamin, his crutches still lying where he had dropped them when Jesus put His arm around him. He would never need them again; the Master's touch had brought healing and strength to that little frame, and Benjamin was a cripple no longer. He was so blissful he longed to sing for joy, and all the children around him felt the same way. Through the stillness of the outer court their voices suddenly rang out, and Benjamin, as well as the children from Bethlehem, joined the child singers of the temple in the joyous song, "Hosanna, hosanna to the Son of David!"

The group of long-robed men still stood around the court, and as they listened to the song their faces grew dark with frowns for the children, and fear and hatred of the Master.

"Hearest Thou what these say?" they

asked Jesus, and He answered, "Yea, have ye never read, 'Out of the mouths of children thou hast perfect praise'?"

The gates swung open and down the road under the sunset sky walked the Master, still followed by the boys and girls. At the entrance of the narrow street which led to Benjamin's home the boy had to leave them, but he knew, from the smile in Jesus' eyes when he said good-bye, that he would see Him again. So, radiant with happiness, he ran to the small dark house where his mother stood at the door, gazing anxiously down the street for the sight of her boy, and straining her ears for the sound of his crutch.

When she saw him, running on his strong feet, straight and well and rosy, she thought she must be dreaming. Not until his arms were around her, his kisses on her cheeks, and his wonderful story poured into her ears, could she believe the sight of her eyes.

"How can we ever thank the Master?" she cried. "Oh, my little son, what can we ever give which will show the Lord Jesus the joy in our hearts?"

XXVIII

THE GREATEST GIFT

ALL the next day Benjamin's mother worked harder than ever, became the Pharisee, for whom she made long robes, had told her he would turn her out of her tiny house unless she sewed faster. The dark, one-roomed hut belonged to him, and she paid rent with the work which made her back ache and her eyes dim. But as she sewed that day her lips were smiling and her eyes bright. She kept thinking of Benjamin, and the Lord who had cured him, and the only worry in her mind was, "How can I show my thankfulness?"

Benjamin was running up and down the streets where the chief men in the city lived, in search of Jesus. He did not know that the Master was spending the night with some friends at Bethany, walking back and forth from Jerusalem through the twilight and the dawn, under the silver-gray olive

trees, amid whose cool shadows He lingered often to gaze sorrowfully at the shining, golden city so full now of His enemies. Early that morning Jesus had walked from the quiet home on the hillside back to the temple. All day He had been there, and as the hours passed He saw sights which brought deep sadness to His heart. The building was indeed gorgeous. There were great pillars and arches made of coloured marble, covered with the most beautiful carving, gilded doors over which twined huge clusters of golden grapes, terraces leading from court to court, while at the top was the sacred place which only the high priests could enter, the holy of holies built of snowy marble and gilded roofs. Through it all walked the Master, surrounded by His twelve disciples, the men whom He had called to leave their work and their homes to be His followers. All whom He passed turned to gaze after Him, the priests and Pharisees with fear and anger, the pilgrims with great curiosity, and those to whom He had brought strength and peace, with looks of adoration.

William Hole

"HE LINGERED OFTEN TO GAZE SORROWFULLY AT THE SHINING, GOLDEN CITY"

Group after group of the cleverest men in Jerusalem came to Him that day asking questions. They hoped He might say something against the government, or the religion of the priests, so they might call Him a traitor and take Him prisoner. But He answered their questions with such skill and power that the sly, crafty men who had been sent to trap Him, turned away dumbfounded and ashamed, exclaiming, "Master, Thou hast well said," and after that no man dared question Him at all. Then Jesus looked around Him sorrowfully at the important men of the city, many of whom were making believe say long prayers, their eyes half closed while they paid no attention to what they were saying. Beyond them He saw those who were poor, and ill fed, and miserable, and He knew that these rich men who wore gorgeous clothes and loved great feasts cared not at all for the poor people who did their work, bearing burdens of long hours and small pay that their masters might be lazy, and comfortable, and selfish. As Jesus gazed at the splendid sweeping robes of the

men around Him and the rags of those beyond, His eyes flashed and He exclaimed to the people, "Beware of the scribes and Pharisees, who love to go in long robes, and love salutations in the market-places, and the chief seats in the synagogue, and the uppermost rooms at feasts; which devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." Then looking straight at the rich men themselves He cried, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in!" He did not stop there; charge after charge He made against them, sins and cruelties and pretenses, fearlessly proclaiming their wickedness to the very men who had the power to kill Him.

The scribes and Pharisees gnashed their teeth with rage, but they did not dare take

Him prisoner with so many there who loved Him and would defend Him.

Into the next court Jesus walked. It was the "court of the women," and in it were the thirteen trumpet-shaped chests where offerings were placed. The Master watched the Pharisees sweep past, one after another, proudly throwing their gold into the treasuries, as the chests were called, that they might appear pious and generous. Among them came the very man for whom Benjamin's mother sewed her fingers to the bone. Her hands had made his splendid robes and he had given her almost nothing for them, saying the house rent was barely paid for by such work. He marched haughtily through the court, opening his pouch slowly that all might see, and counting out five large gold pieces, threw them into a treasury. Behind him, shrinking back against the wall, stood a woman wrapped in a shabby black robe. She looked around shyly to see if any one was watching, and half advanced towards a chest; but while she did so another finely-robed man entered, and waved her out of his

path as if she had been a dog. She was Benjamin's mother.

As she sewed that day in the hot, dark house she had suddenly thought of one way of thanking the Master. The night before the Pharisee had paid her a tiny sum for her work, and after she had bought a bit of food there had been two mites left. It was such a small sum that a rich man would not have stooped to pick it out of the gutter, but it was all the little widow had in the world, her whole fortune. While she sewed the thought had come to her, "I could put my two mites in the temple chest as a thank-offering to the Lord for His great mercy." As soon as her work was done she had hurried through the darkening streets to the temple. Benjamin had not come back, he was still searching for Jesus; so she went alone, and when she entered the great court and found it full of finely-dressed men she felt shy and ashamed. The offering, which had seemed to her so large, now seemed small and mean. "But I am giving all that I have to the Lord," she thought; "perhaps if the Master

knew He would understand," and she stepped timidly across the court and placed the two tiny coins in a chest. The Pharisees about her smiled scornfully, and looked with contempt at the poor little black-robed figure.

Then a man standing in the archway spoke and all stood still to listen. He did not speak loudly, He was talking to the men around Him; but there was a power and a sweetness in the voice which stirred all hearts, and even the Pharisees turned away ashamed. For it was the voice of Jesus and He said, "Verily I say unto you that this poor widow hath cast more in than all them which have cast into the treasury. For all they did cast in of their abundance, but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living."

Through her tears of happiness, the widow saw the white-robed figure of the Master, His arm thrown tenderly about the shoulders of the boy beside Him. It was Benjamin, who had found the Master in the temple and who, as the Pharisees entered in the robes made by the widow, had told Jesus about his

mother and her work. So when she placed the little offering in the chest, Jesus understood what it meant to her, and she, gazing into that beautiful face and knowing that His glorious smile was for her, thrilled with joy as Benjamin had done the day before.

What the Lord said to her then we do not know; we only know that from that day their house was so full of happiness that to the mother and Benjamin it seemed no longer small and cheerless, for they both worked from dawn to dark, with love in their hearts and a song upon their lips.

XXIX

THE FLOCK WITHOUT ITS SHEPHERD

DURING the days of the feast when the Master came to heal and teach in the temple, none followed Him with more adoration than the children from Bethlehem. Then a day came, a Wednesday, when He was not there. No one knew where He was, but the priests and Pharisees talked apart in low, excited tones and the pilgrims feared that if Jesus came He would be taken prisoner. They did not know of the dark and cruel plot made that day in which Judas, one of the disciples of Christ, promised for thirty pieces of silver to betray his Lord, at an hour when His loyal throng of followers would not be near to defend Him.

The next day, Thursday, was the time when the members of each family met and dined together, celebrating what they called the feast of the Passover. In an upper room

of a house in Jerusalem Jesus ate this feast with His disciples, and after that terrible night was over, Peter, the fisherman from Galilee, told the people of Bethlehem what had happened. Whenever in after years Ruth and Nathaniel talked to one another of his account, they seemed to see in their minds three pictures, which were as clear and vivid as if they themselves had been present.

The first was of the quiet upper chamber of the house in Jerusalem. Around the room were couches where the disciples lay, while they ate from the small stool-like tables before them. On the floor clean white mats were laid, and to save them from becoming gray and worn, it was the custom for all who entered to leave their dusty shoes at the door and walk in barefooted. A great copper bowl filled with clear water was at the entrance, and sometimes a slave stood beside it to wash the feet of the guests. But in the picture which the children saw there was no slave, and in his place Jesus Christ, the Son of God, knelt before His disciples, washing their feet with water from the copper bowl

and drying them with a towel tied around His waist. A few moments before there had been sharp quarrelling among His followers about which of them was the greatest, but in the children's picture there was utter silence among the disciples as, with awed surprise and humiliation, they watched the man whom they called Lord and Master perform the work of a slave, teaching them that he who would be the greatest among them should be as one who serves.

¶ After Judas had gone out into the dark to complete his terrible project, and the Passover supper had been eaten, Jesus taught His followers, and prayed for them, in words which are more beautiful than the most exquisite poetry in the world. Then with hearts full of a vague fear of some unknown tragedy which they felt was coming to them that night, the disciples sang a hymn, and with Jesus in their midst walked through the gray twilight to a garden among the olive trees. Once, as they were walking, Jesus stopped and tried to warn them of what was coming. "All ye shall be offended

because of Me this night," He said, "for it is written, 'I will smite the shepherd and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.'" But Peter cried, "Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended." Jesus answered, "Verily I say unto thee that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice." "Though I should die with Thee yet will I not deny Thee!" exclaimed Peter, and the other disciples echoed his words.

The second picture in the children's minds was of the dim garden, above which hung clouds so heavy and lowering that at times the place was in utter darkness. But when the clouds parted and the pale moon shone out, they saw in the picture three of the disciples within the garden gate asleep, while beyond, half-hidden in the shadow of a great tree, knelt the figure of the Master. His arms were outstretched as if in agony, and His cry rang through the dreams of the half-awakened disciples: "O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me except I drink it, Thy will be done."

Then there was a glare of light and the noise of tramping feet through the quiet garden, as a band of soldiers and priests entered; and among them was Judas. Before them stood the quiet, fearless figure of the Master whom they had come to take prisoner. Judas had promised to show them which was Jesus. "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He," he had said, and going straight to the Lord the traitor cried, "Master, Master!" and kissed Him. But it was not needed; there was no doubt in the minds of the men which was the Christ, and before the piercing gaze of that kingly, white-robed figure many fell back dismayed, while others bound Him and took Him captive.

The third picture in the children's minds was in the great house of the high priest where Jesus was taken that night. It was built around a court in which, as the weather was bitterly cold, a fire was kindled, and the priest's servants stood and sat around it warming themselves. Jesus had been led through the arched entrance into the court, and across it and up the steps opposite which

led to the audience chamber. But Peter, who had followed his Lord thus far, stood below before the fire longing to see what would happen. The servants were all speaking scornfully of the Christ, and one of them, a maid who had watched Jesus brought in and had seen Peter following, turned suddenly, and in the light from the blazing fire saw the fisherman. She looked earnestly at him to be sure he was the same man, for any friend of Jesus was in danger there, and when she recognized his bushy hair and dark eyes she exclaimed with disgust, "This man was also with Him." Peter was filled with terror. "Woman," he said, "I know Him not." He tried to steal away through the arch but one on guard there saw him and cried, "Thou art also of them," and Peter, trembling, declared, "Man, I am not." He saw then that he could not hurry away unnoticed, and he tried to join those by the fire and talk with them in a friendly manner that they might cease suspecting him. But the way in which he spoke was the fashion of those in Galilee, not of the men around

"AS JESUS PASSED, HE TURNED AND LOOKED AT PETER"

Jerusalem, and one after another insisted, "Of a truth this fellow also was with Him, for he is a Galilean," and Peter in fearful despair cried out, "Man, I know not what thou sayest!"

While he spoke there shone through the darkness the first glimmer of dawn, and from a branch above rang out the crow of a cock. At the same moment the door at the top of the stairway flew open, and down the steps and across the court walked Jesus, still bound. He was surrounded on every side by His enemies and there, in the centre of the crowd of scornful servants, stood the man who had sworn he was ready to die with Him,—denying that he knew Him!

As Jesus passed He turned and looked at Peter, with a gaze so full of reproach and yet of love that the disciple, forgetting all his fear of the servants, forgetting all but his own miserable disloyalty, rushed out into the night, weeping bitterly.

XXX

THE CROSS UPON THE HILLTOP AND DAWN IN THE GARDEN

A MYSTERIOUS sorrow hung upon the hearts of the children from Bethlehem for some days after they had seen Jesus in the temple, and heard His words of praise for the gift of the poor widow. The faces of their mothers and fathers were white and drawn, and Nathaniel heard whispers of some great tragedy about the Master which was taking place. What it was the children did not know, until one morning they saw upon a distant hilltop three crosses which stood out black and terrible against the sky, and upon each cross there hung a man. Around them a crowd was standing gazing upward at the huge cross in the centre, and the day afterwards the children were told what it all meant.

Upon that great central cross was stretched the Master, and around Him the people surged, and mocked, and reviled. But while

the Lord hung there, suffering the bitterest agony, He opened His lips only to pray for those who were killing Him, to bid one of the disciples, a Galilean fisherman, take care of His mother, to speak comfort to a dying thief who hung on a cross beside Him, and last of all to pray to His Father, God.

And as the mocking throng watched and listened they were filled first with wonder and then with dread, until as the sky grew black, and the Master's body hung lifeless upon the cross, they smote upon their breasts with terror and remorse and many cried, "Of a truth this was a righteous man," and "Truly this man was the Son of God."

The children knew that later His followers, among them the fathers and mothers from Bethlehem, took the body of Jesus, and laid it tenderly in a cave in a garden.

Then a day passed slowly and sorrowfully, and the morning after, at sunrise, the children entered that garden. It was full of silvery light and fragrant with flowers. White lilies swung their glimmering bells in the faint breeze, roses opened their dewy petals, and

beds of violets filled the air with their perfume.

"It is as full of happiness as if He were here," whispered Ruth and then, as the beams of the sun filled the garden, they saw that the gray stone cave they had come to visit was empty. In front of it was a great rock which had been rolled away from the entrance, and around it, with faces full of wondering joy, stood some of the fishermen.

The children crept near them, and as they listened to the words of the men they understood what marvellous thing had happened.

"The women came here at early dawn," said one of them, repeating the tale as if he could hardly believe it. "And they found, you say, the stone rolled away and the cave empty?"

"Yes," answered another, "and while they stood looking in, frightened and perplexed, two glorious angels stood before them who said, 'Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen.' Filled with amazement the women hurried back and told us what they had seen."

"WHY SEEK YE THE LIVING AMONG THE DEAD?"

Then Peter spoke, "When I heard their words my heart, which had been nigh breaking with remorse and sorrow, seemed to leap within me. I ran to the garden and with me came the fisherman John. We also stepped into the cave, and found nothing here but the linen clothes in which the body of the Lord had been wrapped."

"But the story of Mary of Magdala is the most wonderful of all," cried another. "She came with the other women, but the vision of the angels did not comfort her, and she thought only that the body of Jesus had been taken away. As she stood leaning against the outer wall of the cave, weeping, some one came walking towards her through the garden. Her eyes were so full of tears she could not see Him, and she merely supposed Him to be the gardener. 'Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?' He said, and thinking of nothing but that the body of Jesus had gone she cried despairingly, 'Sir, if thou hast borne Him hence tell me where thou hast laid Him and I will take Him away.'

"Then through the still air came the voice of the One who first stirred the heart of the lady of Magdala in Galilee, filling her dark and wayward life with peace and beauty.

"'Mary,' said the Lord, and she threw herself upon her knees, her arms flung wide in an ecstasy of joy, crying, 'Master!'

"Around His face and His white robes the radiance of a heavenly glory seemed to linger. 'Touch Me not,' He said, 'for I am not yet ascended to My Father; but go unto My brethren and say unto them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, My God and your God.'

"Then He was gone, and Mary hastened to find us to tell us the marvellous news,—she had seen the Lord!"

"Let us also go now and seek Him," said the others, and they hurried out of the garden. But the children lingered behind for a time, for the beauty of the flowers and the songs of the birds reminded them of the Master, who had so lately stood there in His risen glory.

XXXI

A SONG AT TWILIGHT

"IF I could only see the Master I would believe your words," one of the disciples exclaimed, when the others told him of the strange things which had happened that morning.

"Except I see in His hands the print of the nails and put my finger into them, and thrust my hand into the spear wound in His side, I will not believe," cried another whose name was Thomas. And many of the followers of Jesus said the same. Only the children knew it was all true as Mary and the other women had said, and each day they watched and waited at the gate of the garden hoping to see the Lord again. Then one twilight as they stood among the flowers, they saw the disciples pass, and upon their faces was a look of such happiness that Nathaniel cried, "Surely they have seen the Master again; let us follow them that we

also may be near Him." And as they surrounded the fishermen who now knew and loved them, they heard the wonderful story of how Jesus had appeared to them the evening before, as they sat in the same upper room where they had eaten the Passover. They had been very lonely and sorrowful, for none of them knew whether they would ever see Jesus again and some of them, like Thomas, did not even believe He had risen from the grave. They had sat there with the doors shut and their heads bowed with grief, and then of a sudden Jesus Himself stood in their midst, and as they gazed at Him, half believing the sight of their eyes, He spoke in His clear, ringing voice.

"Peace be unto you," He said, and into the hearts of every one of them rushed a joy which was never afterwards to leave them.

Then the Master spoke to Thomas. "Reach hither thy finger," He said, "and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into My side, and be not faithless but believing."

Over Thomas' dark face there swept a

H. Hofman

THE CHRIST, THE SHEPHERD OF US ALL

wave of shame and falling upon his knees before Jesus he cried, "My Lord and my God."

Jesus said unto him, "Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed."

"And that means," said a fisherman as he looked at the group of children, "that each child here is blessed. Not one of you ever doubted; every boy and girl believed the story of the risen Lord although none of you have seen Him. Perhaps," he said to the men around him, "that is what the Master meant when He said of the children, 'Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.' He knew that whereas we long to see, and hear, and touch things before we believe they are true, the children of all nations and of all times know within their hearts that the greatest truths, such as the love and power of Jesus Christ, cannot be seen, they can only be felt." The children did not quite understand what he meant, only they knew that a perfect happiness had come to them also. They did

not wait any longer at the garden watching for Jesus, but journeyed back with their fathers and mothers to their homes in Bethlehem.

Soon afterwards Ruth rode behind her mother upon a donkey to Nazareth, and the fisherman father walked by their side as he had done years before, when Ruth was a cripple. But then their faces had been sad and worried, and now they were full of hope and joy.

They heard rumours that to others the risen Christ had appeared. He had spoken with the fishermen one dawn upon the beach of the lake of Galilee, He had broken bread with others, and many had seen Him when He rose from the earth and was lifted as on a cloud of glory above the mountains. But the children knew that although they did not see Him again He was always near them. As they helped the fishermen upon the beach, tended the flocks upon the fields, and cared for the babies at home, they often felt His presence. And night after night, when the first stars shone in the sky, the children of Galilee

and of Bethlehem sang the simple song, which had been sung first to the tiny Christ child, and which always reminded them, as did the murmur of the sea, the sunset clouds and the starry skies, of the Christ who was, and is, and always will be, the Shepherd of Us All.

Wake little baby, the darkness has fled,
Over stars, moon and heavens a glory is shed.
In the hush of its coming a new Star is born,
The Star of our gladness, the Star of Christ's morn.
Wake little baby, look up where on high
The stars are all singing a new lullaby.

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